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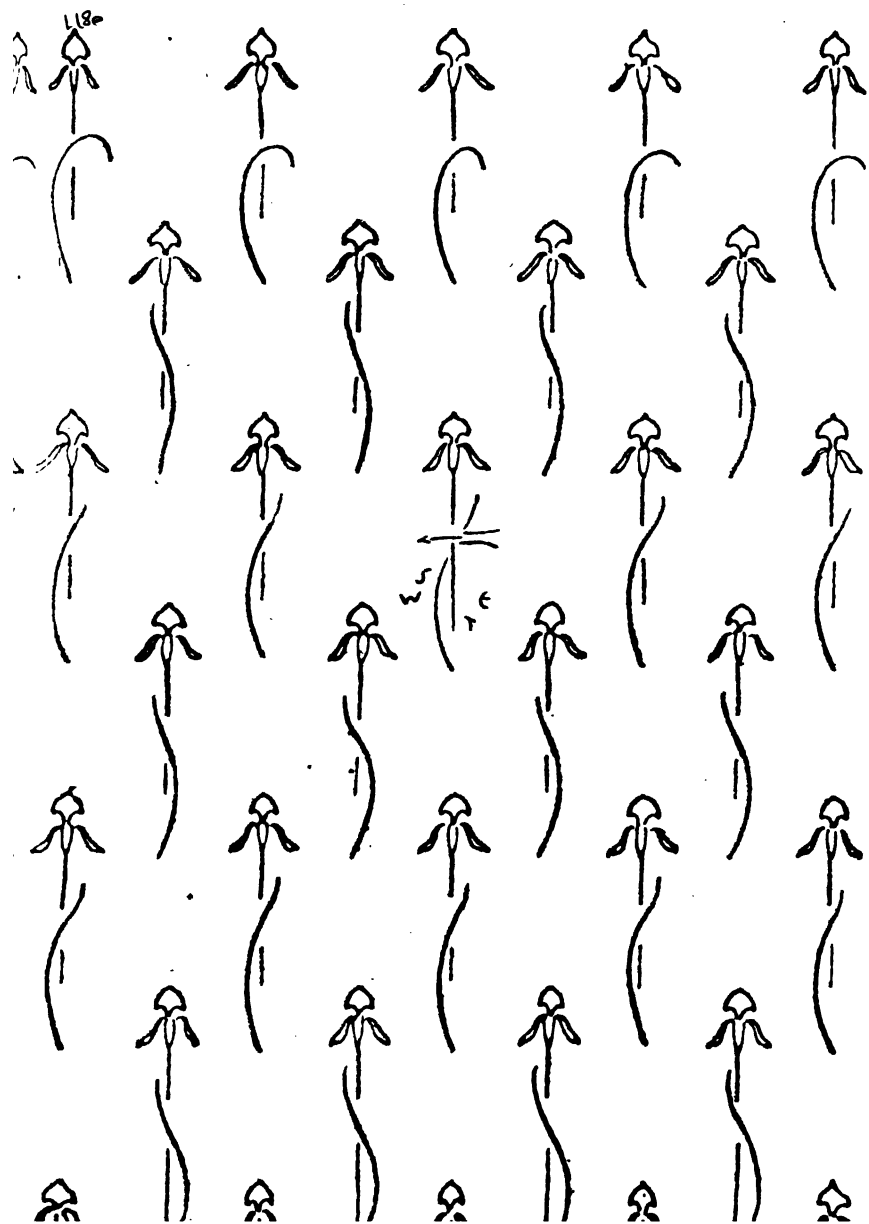
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A RINGBY LASS



"RAIN, RAIN, & SUN! A RAINBOW ON THE LEA!
AND TRUTH IS THIS TO ME, & THAT TO THEE;
AND TRUTH OR CLOTHED OR NAKED LET IT BE"



Now look, now for our dance

A RINGBY LASS
& OTHER STORIES
BY
MARY BEAUMONT



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY I. WALTER WEST
LONDON 1895
J. M. DENT & CO. ALDINE HOUSE



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A RINGBY LASS

THE events of my story took place in a year of the early forties. I am told that this is an objectionable period from the point of taste. And I know that for some years we have been hurrying out of our houses all signs of the time, and replacing its solid and unbeautiful furniture by anything of any period that is not early Victorian.

Yet I am free to confess that, though I shrink from the florid curves and ponderous ugliness of its chairs, and sofas, and tables, there are moments in certain houses of my friends when I am brought perilously near to regretting them. There are imitations of Chippendale and Sheraton, and magnificent reproductions in black oak, the beauty of which is more apparent than the strength. And after a few sad experiences of their

instability the ordinary mind reverts to the cushioned security of that Victorian arm-chair now forlornly dusty in the attic. In the originals of these charming articles there is, I think, more workmanship and less glue.

The dress of men and women I know to have been hideous; I am told that it was so, and I believe it. I believe it all the more, because I think I see some of its worst features copied in the dress of to-day. But when I open the cases of certain miniatures in my possession, and find within those sweet and delicate faces, shaded by abundant ringlets, or surrounded by the large flower-filled framework of the early Victorian bonnet, I see that English beauty was not extinguished by the costume. And when I study with delight Mr Leech's pictures of that time, I feel no inclination whatever to take my hero and heroine out of their proper niche in the years, even though my hero may once have worn side-whiskers and a waistcoat of gigantic checks. Indeed the last miniature I opened the other day showed me so manly and

gallant a head and face of manhood at twenty-six, topped by its clustering curls, that I returned with a sigh to the present day, when one of the chief aims of man is to rid himself of his hair.

So I was delighted to find by the name on the back, *Mark Tennant*, written in a miraculously small pointed hand, that the miniature I held was the portrait of my hero, painted a year after the date of my story.

He was leaning, on an afternoon in May, over the parapet of a half-ruined bridge, spanning with its broken arch a little river, innocent enough in fine weather, but swollen and furious in rain, which ran at the bottom of a sloping field yellow with cowslips. The meadow was part of the property of Mr Bentham of Melhams, that red brick house whose chimneys were just visible from the bridge. The building itself was hidden, lying back a little beyond the slope in a slight hollow. On the field-side of the river was a small boat-house, for, as the water broadened here into a wide shallow, and as the bridge

was only possible to a light foot and a steady head, the occupants of Melhams usually ferried themselves over. The river-side road opposite branched off near by into a short cut to Norton, four miles away, one of the principal towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

My hero was dressed in a suit of summery loose clothes, and he had pulled his straw hat well over his eyes, that he might the better watch the play of the minnows below. He was of an active, well-knit figure, and his face—typically English—had an alert grey eye and a firm and pleasant mouth. He had come into the district as surveyor for a proposed new line of railway, and had made the Old Cock at Tamborough, a village mid-way between Norton and Melhams, his headquarters. It was there that he had frequently met Squire Bentham, a stalwart Yorkshireman with a genial manner, which veiled a large inheritance of Yorkshire caution, and with a fine brown eye, meditative, yet keen.

The elder man had taken great pleasure in

the society of the younger, at first largely because he found him to be no mean judge of horse-flesh, and heard from the landlady that he had set the bull-dog's leg "as weel as th' 'orse-doctor hissen." And after he had inspected him from all sides, as it were, taking pains to inquire into his antecedents, as well as making himself familiar with his capacity for work, and his present habits, he had gratified his sense of hospitality by asking him to spend his holidays at Melhams. "Our old Jane will take care of you like a mother, and we shall make you into a good Yorkshire-man before we've done with you," he said kindly.

When Mark came into the district he had at first been annoyed, and afterwards amused, to find that, to Yorkshire-men generally, the great metropolis was a questionable place, inhabited by people of a poor physique and enervated character.

By his own manliness of appearance and readiness of brain he had made his way into their confidence and liking; but a day seldom

passed without the dropping of a word from one or another, which implied pity for his misfortune of birth in being a Londoner.

Fifty years ago this hostility to "South-erners" and "furriners" was more pronounced than it is now, but even to-day in Yorkshire, and all over the northern counties, there lies deep in the character of the people a native distaste to "the ways" of those born—we will say—south of Nottingham. It is freely allowed that there are numerous exceptions, that in the vast population south of the Trent there are several human beings who might at least do no discredit to the North, nor indeed to Yorkshire, that king of all counties. And when such settle amongst the people they are, it may be, too highly approved, their superiority to their native conditions being extolled as evidence of marvellous personal worth.

It was this feeling which impelled Mrs Sykes of the Old Cock to say to one of her cronies, as she pointed with her soup-ladle to the garden where Mr Tennant sauntered

backwards and forwards amongst the currant-bushes, "Yon's a fine lad, and yo' can understand 'im varry weel seein' he's fro Lunnon. Ah reckon theer's a drap o' gooid Yorkshire blood in 'im somewheer. An' he's a kind un, our Jane Elizabeth tuk to 'im as niver wor, for all shoo's teethin, an' he carried her oop an' dahn t' best pairt o' th' afternooin."

As he leaned on the bridge, a sudden "Hi, maister!" from the roadside caused him to look up quickly. The speaker was an old man, and infirm. His white hair was almost concealed by the hanging corners of a red cotton handkerchief which he had put on under his old top-hat, probably as additional protection from the warm May sun. His trousers of drab corduroy hung in folds about his shrunken limbs, and the worn tail-coat, once black but now fast approaching green, and bought in the time of his youth and strength, was several sizes too large for him. He leaned heavily on his stick as he stood. In the general decay his eyes had preserved their power, and gleamed like blue steel from

the shaggy curtain of his brows. They were fixed with a sharp curiosity on the man upon the bridge, and Mark detected in them a touch of that hostility which he knew well, and which now gave him little concern.

"Well!" he said pleasantly, "do you want anything?"

"Ay, Ah want to know if yo're t' yoong chap as coom o' Tuesday to Melhams, t' yoong engineer or summat?"

"I am the surveyor for the new line, I daresay that's what you mean," replied Mark.

"Ah daresay it is," assented the old man with a nod, "they telled me soa. Weel, t' line'll goa by th' end o' my garden, an' Ah doänt want ony o' yor buzzins an' rum'lins i' my ears. We shannot git a wink o' sleep, niver a wink."

"But you can remove, can't you?" asked Mark, smiling, "there seems to be a lot of cottages about here."

"Flit? nay, Ah'll noäa flit. Do yo' think Ah'm bahn¹ to flit for a blatherskyte of a

¹ bahn—going.

ingin? It's yo' as'll have to flit." He chuckled in the folds of his wide neckerchief. "Tak it *over* th' hill isteäd."

Mark had learnt wisdom in his dealings with the natives, who were one and all opposed to the railways. He shifted his ground.

"Perhaps you're too fond of your house to leave it. Have you lived there a long time?"

"Ay, Ah have *that*. Iver sin' Ah wed Nancy Gledding. Hoo was sarvant at t' Ringbys, an' hoo was nurse to Miss Joseyphine's mother."

"And where is Ringbys, and who is Miss Josephine?" questioned the young man, lazily tracing the cracks in the masonry with his finger.

"Doänt yo' knaw Ringbys?" ejaculated the other with manifest surprise.

Mark leapt across the breach, some three feet wide, and came down to the old man's side.

"He's a garrulous old boy," he said to himself, "and I have absolutely nothing to do until the Squire has done with his men."

The old man laid a bony finger on his sleeve.

"Doänt yo' knaw Miss Joseyphine?"

"No, I haven't an idea who she is."

"Well, Ah'm capped!¹ An' yo're at Mel-hams!" The speaker laughed asthmatically, and his eyes disappeared in deep wrinkles of amusement. "An' yo haven't an idee! Why, hoo's t' Squire's dowter, and hoo's t' bonniest lass i' t' counthry. Theer!"

"She doesn't live at home I suppose," said Mark, with a puzzled air.

"Ay marry, but hoo does. Wheer should hoo live? Happen² hoo's gone to Stapleton, her aunt's noan so weel they telled me."

And where is Ringbys?

"Whoy, tha knaws nowt. If Ah *am* ould Tummas Bates, an' goän' i' four-score, Ah knaw more nor thee. Wheer has ta coom fro'?" The shaggy eyebrows frowned impatiently.

"I come from London," answered Mark slowly, an expectant gleam in his eye.

"Fro' Lunnon!" The aged voice quavered

¹ capped—amazed.

² happen—perhaps.

high in contemptuous amazement. "They've gotten a deal to leärn theer yet." He shuffled back a step or two, narrowly inspecting Mark under his puckered lids.

"Fro' Lunnon!" he repeated, shaking his head deprecatingly.

"Yes," said his companion, with an air of melancholy, "it is a pity, isn't it? But, you see, it's too late to alter now, and we must make the best of it. Suppose you sit on this stone and enlighten me a bit."

Thomas spread a great pocket-handkerchief upon the sun-warmed stone, and sat himself stiffly down—

"It's t' rheumatics," he wheezed "rheumatics and browntitus. Ah wor wunce as nim'le and wick¹ as yo', an' noän so long sin 'nawther. Ringby's noän a place, it's a fam'ly. Miss Joseyphine's mother wor a Ringby, an' t' Ringbys live at Stapleton Hall. An' Miss Joseyphine's a Ringby, ivery inch on her. They allus say at 'A Ringby lass maks a lad's content,'" he

¹ wick—lively.

added, with a sidelong glance like an ancient raven.

“And is it true?”

“Of coorse it’s true. Yo’ wadn’t ax sich a question if yo’ didn’t coom fro’ Lunnon. Ivery body knaws it. T’ missus oop at Melhams hoo wor t’ foinest wife i’ England all but her at went to th’ Indies. Hoo wor th’ eldest, they called her Rachel, an’ shoo wed Captain Stansfield, hoo made him as ’appy as a lark till he deed. Ah knaw shoo did. And t’ yoong lass ’ll do t’ saäme, only t’ man isn’t born as is fit for her, bless her.” There was something very moving to the old man in the thought of this young lass; he drew the back of his hand across his eyes.

“Hoo favours her grandmother, old Madam Ringby,” he continued. “Happen yo’ll see her. Shoo were a Ringby hersen. Hoo’s a duchess if iver theer wor one. Hoo’s noän an old ewe dressed lamb-fashion nawther. Shoo’s old an’ shoo looks it, but shoo’s a picter.”

He folded his hands on the gnarled knob

of his stick, and leaned his chin upon them reflectively.

Mark was conscious of an awakening interest in these Ringbys, especially in this youngest of whom no existing man was worthy.

"Is she quite young?" he asked, "Miss Josephine, I mean."

The old eyes twinkled, "Shoo's a good bit younger nor yo'. Shoo'll be twenty coom September." It interested Mark as an observer of the country people to notice the differences in dialect, and he found that if amongst the younger, or more sophisticated, "shoo" was used for "she," the old ones, and the more ignorant, clung to the ancient "hoo," though they occasionally varied it by the more modern word. With Thomas it was almost always "hoo."

"Na, Ah'll tell yo' what," he continued, with a dark sparkle in his eye, and an argumentative tone, "yo'll happen think yo've seed a deal; lads allus does; but yo've niver clapt een on as bonnie an' gooid a yong lass

as Miss Joseyphine. An' t' Squire knaws it, an' all. Eh! he maks t' warld on her! Shoo'll be coomin' hoam to-neet. Hoo wadn't leäve 'im for a Sunday, choose how. But Ah mun be walkin'. If Ah sit o' this stone ony langer I'se have my knees as crookt as th' heäd o' my stick. Theer's a soort o' lang-settle wheer t' lanes join, if yo've nowt to do yo' can goä wi' me and sit a bit."

The young man recognised this as a gracious sign, and, having "nowt to do," cordially acquiesced.

He soon found that, however reserved old Thomas might be in expressing himself on general matters, the word Ringby was the Open Sesame to his speech. On that subject he could talk for ever. He spoke with a curious mixture of frankness and respect, the frankness of a family friend, and the respectful pride of an old retainer. He gave his listener to understand that the Ringbys were superior to the Benthams, "though t' Squire wor a gooid soort, an' varry feelin'." He believed that the Ringby family was as old as

Stapleton Hill, that purple shoulder which alternately surprises you by its height, and disappoints you by its littleness. In threatening weather it looms above you like a thunder-cloud, and again, on a clear day, it flattens itself into insignificance, and you may climb it in half an hour.

He was eloquent on the virtues of the family, and radiant in dwelling on the "sper-rit" which distinguished all its members; "ther was nowt as would flay¹ 'em, nawther a boggart² nor a Roosian." And he was sure that for "marlocks³ and sich-like" there had never been their equal. He went on to describe the ways of the sons and daughters of the house when Josephine's mother was young and the two boys and the three girls had made "t' bonniest posy i' t' garden."

And he laughed with a boy's abandonment over an escapade of the Misses Ringby just before Rachel went off to the Indies with her captain.

¹ flay—frighten.

² boggart—hob-goblin.

³ marlocks—tricks.

There was, he said, a family of Dewhirsts who had taken the White House at the foot of Stapleton Hill on a long lease. They were "a stuck-oop lot and coom to nowt, an' t' mother, hoo wor fro' Lunnon-way, but Ah reckon folks differ theer as weel as i' these pairts," he added encouragingly.

There were three girls too at the White House, and, stimulated by their share of London breeding, they took somewhat high ground in their intercourse with the home-keeping Ringbys. Then followed a long career of victory for the latter, the last incident of which was as follows.

One summer day Rachel and Caroline, Josephine's mother, rode into Norton to order some "spencers" from a little dressmaker employed by both families.

The Dewhirsts had been especially high-minded and provoking since their visit to London in the spring; and when the Ringbys were shown some wonderful frocks of yellow sprigged muslin, still in the making, and to be worn by their rivals at Stapleton church

on the very next Sunday, a thought of malice sprang full-grown from the brain of Rachel. There was a hurried whisper between the sisters and a question to the dressmaker. Had she any more of the stuff? No, none exactly like it, but she had immediately ordered a piece of similar muslin, even prettier, she thought, and of the same colour of a primrose. She was sure some of her customers would like it.

"But there is not enough for three," Caroline whispered.

"No, one of us must sacrifice herself for the family," was Rachel's prompt rejoinder, given with a bridling neck, "We will take the material with us, thank you, Miss Jones."

"An' though it wor Friday nooin," ended Thomas, "them three lasses stuck to t' gowns reight on while t' morn o' Saturday; they wadn't stir to ait. Nancy browt 'em a bite o' summat off an' on, an' o' Saturday neet, just afore t' clock struck twelve, t' gowns wor done. An' Rachel, hoo said at th' two best-

lookin' on em mun¹ wear 'em. Hoo wadn't have onybody dowly an' peaked o' that day. So shoo and Ann, t' yoongest yo' know, donned 'em. Miss Caroline wor a tenderer soort, and fair 'ooined² wi' tewin'³ at it so long."

"They wor i' t' pew i' varry gooid tahm, an' when them Dewhirst lasses coom in a bit late, so at all t' warld mud tak notice on 'em, noddin' saäme as paycocks,—theer i' t' Ringby pew, fair at t' boddum o' th' aisle, wor them two, noän o' yor doouf⁴-faces an' ginger hair, but creäm an' roses, an' hair as black as a crow, lookin' as innocent as a babby, an as bewtiful as them,"—the knotted hand pointed to the thick masses of hawthorn-blossom above the wooden seat in front of them.—"Ay, theer they wor i' t' saäme mak an' colour o' gown, an' settin' it off rarely. Eh! but t' Dewhirst lasses looked foul! An' Ah wor that tickled at Ah bethowt mysen o' t' graveyard an' slipt behind t' wall, an' Ah luffed

¹ mun—must.

² hooined—fatigued, harassed.

³ tewin—struggling.

⁴ doouf—dough.

till my heäð warked.¹ Nancy, shoo'd telled me summat wor oop."

Mark joined in the old man's laughter, "But that Miss Rachel was rather an alarming customer, wasn't she?" he said, as the old man brought himself carefully down upon the ancient bench. "Hoo wor t' foinest lass i' England, an' hoo wor reight whativer hoo did," was the indignant answer, given with a kind of breathless snort. He would not endure the faintest breath of criticism. And after that conversation languished. Thomas closed his eyes and took refuge in surly monosyllables.

The offender, hoping that silence might be the best peacemaker, leaned back against the trunk of the thorn behind, and gave himself to enjoyment of the sun-filled peace and to various reflections.

It was surely odd that he had heard nothing from Mr Bentham of his daughter. He had come on Tuesday, it was now Saturday, and no one had mentioned her. Up to this

¹ warked—ached.

moment he had believed his host to be a childless widower. The signs of feminine taste about the house he had attributed to the dead wife; certainly not to that uncompromising martinet, old Jane, who had received him on his arrival with a frigid civility which as yet showed little sign of thaw. He had prided himself upon his successful relations with this stiff-backed folk, so candid in comment and independent of spirit. But in Jane's presence he had a sense of double mortification, he apparently awoke in her neither interest nor approval.

He wondered how her young mistress fared. And again he reflected upon Mr Bentham's silence regarding his daughter. He decided that it came from an exaggeration of this extraordinary northern reserve. Was she really coming home to-day? And would she be like the resolute Rachel?

"Josephine, Josephine," piped the thrush from his blossomy bower above. The young man half-unconsciously sang the ascending triplet, and the word on his lips was Josephine.

Old Thomas asleep at his side moved. His stick fell sideways among the docks and herb-Robert under the hedge. He grasped Mark's arm. "Sithee, sithee!" he whispered hurriedly. Mark looked up the lane. It turned off from the river-road, between two hedges of hawthorn backed by young larches; the rude bench stood at the very angle where the lane branched from the road, and the leafy arms of the old thorn, which formed its back, enclosed it on either side.

To those who sat there both ways were plain, but they themselves could be seen of none but such as came immediately in front of them. The seat went by the name of "T lovers' settle," and every part of it was slashed and carved with initials and tender devices.

Not fifty yards up the lane a green oasis divided the sandy way encircling an enormous beech, the branches of which stretched over both hedges. It had grown for centuries unmolested and uncrowded. No larches were planted along its breadth, it had taken freely

of the sun and air during many generations of man, and had reared itself to a proud perfection.

To-day every young leaf had caught a sunbeam, and, touched by the merest breath of a gentle wind, the tree palpitated with light.

"Be quick, be quick," insisted the thrush loudly. "Sithee, sithee, theer shoo is!" came in an excited whisper from Thomas. Out from the long swaying branches of the beech, a dapple of delicate shadow on her beautiful face and upon the tender lilac of her dress, stepped a girl, followed by a tawny Irish terrier. She looked earnestly down the lane, turned quickly and peered back under the sweeping boughs, then she laughed, and the Spring laughed with her.

"Now Jock," she said, "now for our dance! Let me hang up this horrid hat first." She knotted the wide strings together, and tossed them over the branch above her head. The dog evidently understood; he remained a few paces off, one foot slightly raised, and his tongue lolling out, all a-quiver with expecta-

tion. Then the dance began. First the slow movement of a minuet, performed with a careful and charming dignity, then a gradual quickening of the steps. Now she took an end of her gauzy scarf, and began a polka—the dog panted with eagerness, leaping up and down. “Shoo’s at her marlocks,” muttered Thomas.

Round and round went the lissom figure with its floating hair, dainty as a flower against the golden green of the sunlit leaves. Faster and faster skimmed the flying feet.

“Now!” she cried in a high sweet voice like a flute. And Jock, one ecstasy from nose to tail, raced backwards and forwards with the speed of lightning, catching at the airy scarf, tumbling in his madness, but uttering no sound beyond his quick pant. “Now!” rang out the flute-like voice again. She twirled herself like a teetotum, and sinking upon the grass, laughing and breathless, her dress spreading itself about her in what children call a “cheese,” held out her arms to the dog. He leapt into them with one sharp bark, frenzied

with joy, licking her face. "O Jock, she said, kissing the top of his head, "you are the very dearest idiot! Now, down Sir, we must be proper again." She rose to her feet, and, jumping up, caught her hat by its strings and pulled it from the bough.

"There," she said, tying it on and addressing the dog again, "we must be as neat as a pin. You, Sir, are a perfect fright, as rough and tumbled as if you had been fighting; take my gloves and be as respectable as you can. We shall meet father soon, and we must uphold the dignity of Melhams." Jock, with a comical lift of one ear, set off a-head, carrying the gloves with great show of pride.

"Doänt let on 'at yo seed her, she'd fair shaäme," urged the old man anxiously, poking Mark in the side with the end of his stick.

"Of course not," was the reply, a touch of irritation in the tone.

He walked forward into the sunshine, Thomas hobbling up behind. He had been in a fascinated dream for the last few minutes. He was naturally sensitive to beauty of every

kind, but not given much to poetical imaginings, and for years his whole mind had been concentrated on his profession and its preparatory studies. Yet at this moment it seemed to him that he had surprised the Spring in her secret haunts. He had seen her leading the beautiful dance of the ripening hours, and there was a mystic glory in the sunlight and a fragrance in the air only to be accounted for by the visible presence of the goddess.

Years after, when the white upon his head had almost banished the brown, he said to me, as we paced between the sunflowers in his garden: "I would give twenty thousand pounds if I could have a picture of her as she looked at that moment."

And now Jock met them, and they were face to face with Josephine.

A few paces off the elastic step faltered; she was evidently startled, and to both men there was this question in the clear brown eyes, "Did you see me just now?"

To their credit, or discredit, neither man

betrayed a hint of the truth. Thomas shuffled forward.

“Miss Joseyphine, this is t’ yoong mon ’at’s visitin’ yor feyther. He coom o’ Tuesday. Ah’ve heerd ’is naäme, but Ah’ve forgotten it, an’ he’s fro’ Lunnon.”

Mark reddened, the large eyes were bent on him in surprise.

“Mr Bentham very kindly asked me to spend my little holiday with him at Melhams,” he began rather stiffly, but Josephine interrupted him.

“You are Mr Tennant, I am sure,” she said, with a bright graciousness which set him at his ease at once. “Father has spoken of you several times. I have been with my aunt since Monday; she is a great invalid; and in this barbarous region a very little distance puts one out of reach of news, we don’t write if we can help it. That is why I hadn’t heard, you see.”

They shook hands, and she turned to the old man at her side. “Why, Thomas, how dare you come out without your comforter,

after that bad attack of bronchitis too? I am surprised at Nancy."

"Eh, hoo worn't to blaäme, Ah wor fair stalled¹ o' hearin' abaht yon browntitus an' Ah throwed t' comforter at t' back o' t' bed, afore Ah coom out." He spoke apologetically, stealing a deprecating glance at the young lady as she walked between himself and Mark with a pretty air of stateliness.

She shook her head, her voice was reproving, but her eyes danced.

"You will be turned out by the Methodists for temper, I know you will, Thomas. And some day Nancy will be clapping you into the stocks by the Church, see if she doesn't. She is a good bit stronger than you now."

"Shoo's baän² to be'ave hersen sin shoo's nobbut³ t' wife," he replied.

"Well, I don't know," insisted Josephine solemnly. "I read of a woman near Hull last week, who tied her husband's legs and arms and dipped him in the beck for calling her bad names, and——"

¹ stalled—wearied, ² baän—bound, ³ nobbut—only.

He interrupted her with tremulous anger. "Hull, did yo' say, it's t' warst plaäce i' England, waur nor Halifax, an' Ah'll warrant t' women's as bad as t' plaäce."

"Really! is it worse than—than London?" she asked innocently. She stared straight before her. Old Thomas broke into a laugh, his heat died at once.

"Eh," he said, glancing delightedly at Mark, who was looking at the girl with an amused smile, "tha caps owt."¹

She pulled out her watch.

"Do you think you could walk a little faster, Thomas, or shall I wait for you at the bridge? I don't want father to cross it, and I don't want you to hurry. The boat may be at this side, you know."

"Ay, Ah can push on a bit." But though the pace was mended she kept a little in advance. Occasionally she would fall back, chatting with one or the other, but there seemed to be an inward prick of thought which urged her on. Mark had thus

¹ you beat everything.

an excellent opportunity of looking well at her. He was astonished to find her so tall. Under the giant beech she had appeared slender and small, fairy-like indeed. In reality she was scarcely an inch and a half shorter than himself, and he rose just above middle height. Yes, "creäm an' roses" was a capital description of her warm and dainty colouring. Her eyes were of the brown of her father's, but more luminous, and of a different shape, and their colour deepened with her emotions. At first they had been those of a startled child; when she bantered the old man, Puck himself laughed out of them, and the brown had a transparent lightness and brightness. The wind had risen, it lifted the long curls and blew them back from the delicate profile; he could see the line of a mouth both proud and sweet, and decided that her features were not her father's—no doubt they were inherited from those remarkable Ringbys.

He had always been impressed with the springy and easy walk of the people, accus-

tomed, as they were, to hills and broken ground, and as she pressed forward, on the bridge coming in sight, he noticed in her a yet lighter and freer step.

"Ay, hoo's a clean stepper, hoo is," wheezed old Thomas, divining his thoughts, and making great efforts to overtake her.

Mark was conscious of an unreasoning irritation towards the old labourer, his comments were becoming an impertinence, and he hastened after Josephine. Mr Bentham was coming down the slope opposite, he stopped on seeing them, and the girl called out—

"Father, father, wait there for me, don't cross." She hurried to the foot of the bridge. The boat was drawn up on this side, and Mark drove it into the water.

"Here's the boat, Miss Bentham," he cried. She had her foot on the bridge.

"What!" she laughed, "for me? Oh no, thanks, but will you bring Thomas?" She had leapt the chasm, and, running up the steep bank, threw her arms round her father.

Mr Bentham pushed back the broad hat, and took her face between his hands.

“My little lass,” he said fondly.

“And you are sure you didn’t miss me too much?”

“Well, really, what am I to say?” he said, drawing her hand through his arm. “I shall be in a boggle either way. If I didn’t miss you, you’ll be hurt, and if I did, you’ll be sorry. We won’t go into the question, my dear. So you met Mr Tennant on the road! Well, Thomas!”

Mark, ashamed of an annoyance which he felt to be ridiculous, had given his arm to the old man, who climbed the hill painfully, breathing with difficulty.

“Hoo’s coom back, Squoire,” he panted.

It was Mr Bentham’s way, and the way of many of his class at that time, to speak to his servants, and to the country people generally, in broad Yorkshire.

“Ay, lad,” he said, “an’ I’m glad on’t. Tha mun goä into t’ kitchen and get thy teä.”

"Ah'm noän here for summat to ait," objected Thomas, drawing himself up stiffly.

"No, of course not," put in Josephine soothingly, withdrawing her hand from her father's arm, and patting Thomas's sleeve, "but when I have just come back after being away nearly a whole week, you couldn't be so rude as to refuse to drink a cup of tea in my honour!"

"No, Ah couldn't, Ah'll do owt to plaze yo'," he answered simply, mollified at once. As he spoke the steel blue eyes rested upon her with admiring love. It probably struck him that he had been easily vanquished, for he pushed Mark aside with some sharpness. "Nay, Ah doänt want *thy* arm na'!" he added gruffly.

The girl looked across the bowed white head and its strange headgear with a beautiful expression of mingled apology and appeal for forbearance, which might have comforted a man for a far greater mischance than this repulse. Mark signified by a smile his perfect comprehension. It seemed to him

that the little episode had been for him a stride in friendship. The queer and irritable sensitiveness had become a common charge and a bond between them. At the moment he had the largest charity for Thomas.

Mr Bentham was busy with some letters which Josephine had brought from Stapleton, some Indian letters from the son of that Captain Stansfeld who had been as happy as "a lark" with Rachel. The trio walked on before him.

"Has father been well all the week, Mr Tennant?" asked Josephine gravely.

"Exceedingly well, I should think," Mark smiled, "he is always busy, and I never met anyone so hospitable and kind."

"He is the kindest man in the world," she answered in a tone of strong conviction, "and I am so thankful he is well." The last words were said rather absently.

"T" Squire's allus been as strong as a 'orse," broke in Thomas, "an' why sudn't he be? He gets his meals reg'lar, an' he's plenty o' brass, an' yo're mother an' dowter i' one to 'im."

"And yet that is not everything," she said gaily, "though, no doubt, it ought to be."

They were now close to the white gate in the low brick wall which bounded the lawn at the back of the house. There was little to admire in the plain red walls and rows of square windows, but the long glass doors opening into the garden from the library were sentinelled by ranks of blue larkspur, and the beds running along the house were gay with the flowers of the late spring and early summer. The orchard to the right was in its fairest beauty.

"How home-y it looks to-night," said Mark, as they paused at the gate.

Josephine glanced at him, "What a nice word!" she exclaimed.

"It is my little sister's, she is a queer monkey and invents her own language, but we often end by adopting it."

"I should like to know her," said Josephine pleasantly. "How noisy you are, Jock!"

For Jock, gloves still in mouth, was jump-

ing up at the latch and rattling it. The gate opened, he scurried away up the path and round to the French window, through which he disappeared.

"Greedy, Greedy!" sang Josephine after him; "he's afraid the cats will have eaten his dinner," she explained.

"My little sister would call him a *Grab-bage*," said Mark. And that second glance of pleasure from Josephine convinced him that she had the sweetest as well as the brightest eyes he had ever seen.

"Thomas, will you come through the library with us, it will save you the walk round," said the young lady.

"Nay," was the resolute answer, "it taches t' yoong 'uns bad manners, if theer's ony on 'em abaht. Kitchen's t' plaäce for us," and he hobbled on towards the green door which led into the yard at the left.

"You mustn't misunderstand him, Mr Tennant, he may be a rough jewel, but the jewel is there."

They were crossing the lawn.

"I think I am getting to understand them," Mark answered, "just at first they seemed rather——"

"Savage," suggested Josephine drily, the colour mounting to her cheek.

Mark laughed.

"Is that your word for it, Miss Bentham? Now I should have said *brusque*."

The slight shade of resentment vanished.

"I suppose they are brusque—perhaps we all are," her candid eyes turned full upon him. "And we are a little—touchy! But really and seriously at the bottom we are not bad. I don't believe you will find anywhere in the world kinder and stauncher hearts than in these country-people who perhaps are rather prickly at first. There is Jane now, she used to be my nurse. I daresay you have found her rather discouraging," there was distinct mischief in her voice, "but really she is the dearest old creature in the world. Here she is."

The angular elderly figure of the house-keeper, in her prim cap and neat dress, came

out quickly from the open window. Flushed as it was with joy, her hard pale face had lost ten years of its age, and she took the girl in her arms as a mother might have done.

"Eh, child, you're welcome as flowers i' May," she said, as Josephine kissed her. "I thought you were never coming back no more. Eh, but I was getting as mum as a mouse without you."

"I hope you haven't been mum to Mr Tennant," the girl said blithely, setting the woman's cap straight.

Jane's manner stiffened as Mark came forward.

"He's been well looked after I reckon. I don't know that he's anything to complain of," she addressed him rather than her young mistress.

"No, nothing, excepting, indeed, that you wouldn't talk to me; but that was evidently your fault, Miss Bentham, for being away."

Jane gave him the first favouring look, but her words were ungracious enough.

"I never hold with bletherin' with every-

body as comes," she answered, stepping back over the low ledge of the window.

"Perhaps you will wait for father," said the girl, following her. "There are a hundred things for me to see about."

When they met again for the early-Victorian supper, that plentiful meal, which looked very inviting spread in the long dining-room, brightened by fine old silver, and crowned by a great bowl of cowslips, his thoughts flew back to the dance under the beech-tree.

She had "donned," to use Thomas's delightful word, a thin white gown, with little frills that moved above the slender sandalled feet in airy undulations; and he could see again the dainty head with its high coil of dark hair and dropping curls. The low bodice showed the beautiful curves of the creamy throat and neck, and she presided at table with a touch of unconscious dignity that recalled to his mind the old man's description of Madame Ringby, the "duchess."

During her absence the Squire had made

particular efforts to entertain Mark at meal-times, and had talked fluently and congenially on many subjects. But to-night he was almost silent, silent and well content. He left the conversation to the two young ones—listening to their sallies with a smile, or occasionally giving an opinion. His gaze wandered from his daughter's face to the picture behind her, of her mother in her youth, bright with as fresh a bloom, but with something less of spirit in the carriage of the head. And Josephine constantly glanced at her father with an expression of mingled love and wistfulness.

This expression then and in after days set Mark wondering. And when his visit had extended from two to three weeks, owing to the earnest insistence of the Squire, and perhaps not less to Josephine's ready support of her father's invitation, he came to the conclusion that Mr Bentham was ill. There were certain days when the dulled eye and the deadening of the florid colour were evident to any on-looker, and on these days the girl laughed little and her voice lost its ring.

He saw in her the same signs of solicitude one morning when she came into breakfast. She had been in the garden, and brought with her a sense of sun and fresh air. The two men stood together on the hearthrug, and Mark saw her look from her father to himself, an evident comparison in her mind. She was noticing, he thought, the difference in their breadth and height, and he regretted that he had not the big frame of the Squire, who stood six feet two in his stockings.

But she was in reality struck by the alert compactness of the one and the new droop and heaviness in the attitude of the other. Mark, speaking to her a few minutes later, saw a brooding trouble in her eyes. Mr Bentham was making some playful excuse for his lack of appetite, and drawing her attention to an announcement of a forthcoming agricultural meeting at Norton.

"How can a man eat when he has all the arrangements for this thing to make owing to the Secretary's illness? I wish I had never promised to undertake the work. You forget,

my dear, that we are not all nineteen, and Josephine Bentham with nothing to do!" He expected her to take up the challenge, as did Mark. But in reply she brought his cup round to him, standing a moment at his side with her hand on his shoulder.

"Josephine Bentham will soon have a great deal to do. She will have to nurse her father—if he gives up eating on every little pretext," she said, with an attempt at playfulness.

The Squire frowned. The pleasant courtesy of his manners threatened to forsake him.

"Really, Josephine," he began sharply, but she put her hand on his lips.

"Yes, I know, father dear, you are as strong as Samson, and it was horrid of me to forget. To help me to remember, you will take this egg, won't you?" He took it and broke the shell, but Mark saw that he tasted but once, and afterwards merely played with the spoon. This little scene strengthened his conviction that Mr Bentham's health was failing, and that his daughter knew it; and

from that moment he devoted himself to lighten his self-imposed labours, and a watchful deference crept into his manner which did not escape Josephine.

The second week of his holiday he was constantly with one or both of them. The mornings were a busy time with her. She retained her mother's housewifely customs. The house-keeper's room was even yet a still-room, and the long shelves were laden with wines and cordials made from flowers and herbs.

She took charge of the poultry, and fed them regularly herself.

And the cook proclaimed far and near that her young mistress had the lightest hand for pastry in the West Riding.

So Mark rode or tramped with the Squire during the early hours of the day, and mindful of his discovery respecting his health, insisted on taking upon himself most of the correspondence regarding the Agricultural Meeting.

Of an afternoon he and Josephine would

gather cowslips for that year's wine, or visit the cottagers, amongst them Nancy Bates, a splendid specimen of an aged Yorkshire-woman, with bands of waving white hair, under which the kind blue eyes beamed goodwill to all. She spoke to Mark with much deference of Thomas, her husband, and defended him when Josephine accused him of setting his wife's opinion at nought, though, when the old man justified himself to his favourite, she cut him short with a good-humoured, "Haud thy noise, tha knaws ther's na livin' wi' thee when tha gets thy back oop."

And Thomas apparently took the assertion as a compliment. It showed that, though hampered by physical weakness, he was still master in his own house.

On other days the Squire and the two young ones rode over the moors that Mark might see the neighbourhood's points of greatest beauty, and twice Mark and Josephine walked over to Stapleton, two miles nearer Norton, the Squire being detained at

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the latter place until late, and intending to join them as they returned. It was a favourite plan of his to leave his horse at the Old Cock, and take the short cut by the ferry.

"I have walked that road scores of times with her mother," he once said with a sigh to Mark, when Josephine had left the room after vainly trying to persuade him to ride round by the highway and the public bridge, and the young man was touched by the confidence.

Mark never forgot his second visit to Stapleton Hall. It remained for ever a sacred picture in his heart's inner shrine. His fortnight's holiday, extended to three weeks by the directors who knew his worth, was all but over. True, Melhams was still to be his head-quarters for a week longer, but the happy three-fold life would soon be behind him. There would be times when the surveying would keep him at a distance until late, probably he might have to stay away all night, and so lose an enchanted evening. It seemed to him that he was being banished already from that ideal fellowship of the

father and daughter, and he caught eagerly at Josephine's proposal to walk over in the late afternoon to Stapleton.

She was so much at one with Nature that her whole individuality seemed to bloom out of doors. It was there that the delightful mixture of child-likeness and womanhood in her character was most apparent, and in his dreams of her—and I own he had dreamt of her more than once—he always saw her “in sunshine and sweet air.”

Jock, that zealous companion of their walks, was not with them. He had come back that morning from a run over the fields, limping, and one of his front feet dropping blood. He had probably trodden on a piece of metal or glass, and the coachman, Ben, the greatest authority in the neighbourhood, decided that he must be kept at rest for a day or two. Jock's great mind understood the whole thing, he was confident that Ben was paying him off for certain snappings at his calves, and shyings of young horses unaccustomed to the frantic barking of a terrier. His yelps of disappoint-

ment pierced every corner of the house, by which the nerves of Tiger, the yard-mastiff, were so irritated that he broke into a furious baying, and the stable-lad trembled.

When they were crossing the bridge, both of them in their youth and health scorning the boat, Mark's heavier weight or more vigorous jump dislodged a stone, and a large one, from the Melhams side, and the gap was widened by some inches, "How abominably clumsy of me!" he exclaimed, "but really, Miss Josephine, if it will only keep you from crossing the bridge, I shall be thankful." He had fallen into the way of the place, and had dropped "Miss Bentham."

Her reply was to run up the incline of the bridge, and leap the breach like a kid, facing him afterwards in a glow of lovely mutinous defiance.

"Yes, I know you are hopeless," he returned, laughing, "but nevertheless, that old ruin is dangerous, and I shall tremble, I assure you I shall, every time you cross it. It ought to be pulled down and rebuilt."

"By whom, Mr Tennant?" Josephine lifted her chin saucily.

"By anybody. Mr Bentham, I should think, as he is the owner of the property."

"That shows that you are a 'furriner,' and that you know little of the neighbourhood!" she rejoined lightly, springing back again and walking along with him. "Nothing would induce father to do such a thing. The bridge is partly his and partly Lord Scarthorpe's. His Lordship once swore that he would never have a stone lifted to repair it, and father was so annoyed by his manner, that he refused to re-build more than his own side; and I don't see that that would be of much use!"

"Then I think he should forbid you to go that way. After the fall of this morning he probably will. And I earnestly hope the Squire himself never attempts to jump the hole; his weight, in the present condition of the bridge, might bring a foot or more down, and he would get a shocking fall." Mark spoke very seriously.

The girl stopped short; it was at the meet-

ing of the ways, and the ground was white with fallen blossom. Her face was as white as the showered petals.

"Oh, do you really think so, Mr Tennant? Yes, I see. It *is* too dangerous, and father must never, never come back that way again. What shall I do?"

The young man's heart smote him. She stood before him, shocked and pale, her large eyes full of sad appeal. Something stirred within him and brought the blood to his face.

"Miss Josephine," he said impetuously, "don't look like that. Nothing dreadful is likely to happen; we shall warn him, of course; he will understand at once. Why, I never thought you could be frightened," he went on, rallying her. "What did old Bates say? No Ringby feared either 'boggart or Roossian.'" She smiled faintly.

"But this is different, this is *father*,"—her lips quivered,—"and he is not well, Mr Tennant."

"I know," said Mark gently.

"Yes, after mother died he had an attack

of unconsciousness, and twice since it has come. The doctor has told Aunt Ann and me that we must be very watchful of him, and yet—it is so difficult—we are by no means to let him know that he is watched. His mind must be kept happy and busy, and, as it were, away from himself.”

A bright drop fell to the ground. She bent her head so that the ringlets hid her face. Mark dared not speak to her, but he was conscious of only one desire—the desire to comfort. After the briefest pause, she said to him, her face still hidden—

“I feel a traitor even to have mentioned it. He hates to think that we remember, and the only time in his life that he has spoken to me with a hint of anger has been when I have openly tried to take care of him. You will never let him see that you know!”

“Never,” answered Mark fervently, adding, “but surely one might do a great deal without awakening his suspicions.”

“Yes,” she tossed back her hair, and the courage came back to her voice, “we might,

and I think we do. Dick, the groom, who lives on the river bank, has orders to ferry him over in the boat if he happens to come that way from Stapleton or Norton. And the boy is very trustworthy. I believe I am growing into a silly, 'wittering'¹ thing, and becoming stupidly anxious. But I have wanted to thank you, Mr Tennant, for your goodness to father. I am not blind, and I have seen how much you have done for him constantly. Oh, it has been the greatest relief!"

The gratitude beaming in the beautiful eyes worked confusion in her companion's mind. He muttered some commonplace about being "glad if he could be of any help," etc., and told himself that he was an ass.

There was a good deal of desultory talk after this, constantly interrupted by Josephine's interest in the life of the way-side. Nature-trained, she missed nothing from the first touch of red on an early wood-strawberry to the small scuffling form of a wren among last

¹ wittering —complaining.

year's leaves in the hedge-bottom, brown as they, and to Mark indistinguishable from them.

As they neared Stapleton she suddenly asked, "Are you a Tory or a Whig, Mr Tennant?"

Now Mark had been stationed long enough in the North to know something of the condition of the people. He had seen constant evidence of their poverty and unrest, and his political convictions were gradually changing. He who had left London an ardent Tory found himself growingly sympathising with the working classes. He hesitated—he was sure that Mr Bentham would be a Tory of the old sort, and, naturally, Josephine was at one with her father. He intensely disliked the idea of an argument with her on such a subject; still, principle was principle. If there had been a loophole he would undoubtedly have crept through it. But there was none.

"I was brought up as a Tory," he said, "but I have lately found myself sympathising a good deal with the Liberals."

“Have you?” was her immediately interested question. “I am so glad.” Mark breathed freely. “That is just my feeling, though I know very little about the matter. I am afraid father is true and truest Blue, but I am like that fading leaf of the Cuckoo-pint there—plentifully spotted with yellow. Yellow is the Whig colour here. Perhaps you will help me to clearer views. But not now,” she said with a little gesture of alarm, as they approached a tall gateway at the side of the road. “At these gates it is treason to speak on such subjects, and Grannie could smell it I am sure. She can’t endure change of any kind, and when the Penny Post came in last year, she told father that it would be the ruin of England. She said it would encourage a gadding and gossiping spirit all over the country. The Ringbys are a stiff-necked race, and here’s the family fiend, Mr Tennant.”

A strange hybrid, half griffin, half lion, with a sardonic grin, sat on each worn and grey side-pillar of the gate-way, guarding the entrance.

The drive ran through a strip of woodland, still sprinkled sparsely with the last primroses. A smooth border of old turf edged the road on either side, but beyond it Nature was left to herself. She had enriched her boulders with moss, and fringed her streamlet with fern, and filled every inch of her ground with leaf and flower. The light foliage of the oaks beyond the belt of grass recalled to Mark that green glory of the beech on the day of his first sight of Josephine. The drive ended abruptly to the left of the old Tudor mansion itself, where a slight gate of iron led into a little close of grass and gravel; and the four beds upon the greensward blazed with tulips. There were tulips again in front of the encircling border of plants, a thick massed line, scarlet, and striped, and white.

"This flare of tulips is Grannie's idea," said the girl, "she has a second supply always ready to replace the first; she thinks it sets off the old house."

"And it certainly does," Mark answered, "it makes a charming picture."

"Tell Grannie that and she will love you for ever," she said, passing into the garden.

Standing by the sundial in the middle of the grass-plot was Madam Ringby, erect and slight in her black silk hood and cloak, with a light garden-rake in her hand. She saw the pair at once, and watched them coming to her with her proud bright eyes—Josephine's eyes, but grey. Mark's quiet respect had pleased the old duchess, and she welcomed him with a kind cordiality.

"My daughter wants to see you very much," she said, "and to-day is a good opportunity. She is very well for her, poor thing."

"It is very good of her to see me at all," he answered warmly. He had heard of the invalid's suffering from her niece.

"So you can take him up at once, my dear," continued the old lady, "and come down to me. Duncan has gone to his tea, and I want to clip those shoots of honeysuckle on the summer-house—they flaunt all over the path.

"Yes, Grannie, we will regularly enjoy ourselves in his absence," replied the girl with a little meaning smile, caressing the soft wrinkled hand.

"My dear," Madam Ringby said loftily, "I am not afraid of Duncan."

"Oh no, Mr Tennant, don't imagine that," protested Josephine, demurely arching her dark eyebrows. "We are not at all afraid of him, only we are a little glad when he goes to his tea, that is all."

"Scotch gardeners are always more or less pig-headed," said Madam Ringby, setting off along the front of the house, and tapping the gravel with her rake as she went.

"I almost wonder you dare tease your grandmother, she is such an embodiment of dignity," remarked Josephine's companion, as he looked after the stately figure.

"Well, I am sometimes surprised at myself, and there are days when I dare not. But Nancy says she was a great tease herself in her youth, and she has compassion perhaps for a family failing."

They went through the open iron-studded door, into a low corridor hung with dark portraits, which led into the heavily-raftered hall, upon whose walls gleamed trophies of ancient arms, and the frames of as ancient pictures. As they walked up the shallow steps of the oaken stair-case, Josephine said gently and seriously—

“We have a fiend and a dragon, but we have also a saint—a saint who does not know that she is one—and that is Aunt Ann. As I have told you, she is never an hour without pain, and some days it is just the rack for her from morning to night. But we never talk to her of her suffering; it makes her pity *us* too much,” she smiled tenderly, “and on her good days she almost wins us to forget it. This is her room.”

Mark felt that he rather shrank from the interview. He had seen little of pain, and had felt little of it, and he dreaded the opening of the door. But Josephine tapped at once, and a cheerful voice cried “Come in.”

The chamber was large, and lit by two

wide low windows looking west and south, and under the western mullions, partly shaded by a thick cable of old ivy which crossed the corner and straightly embraced the walls, lay the fragile shadow of that once vigorous Miss Ann, who, after the herculean sewing feat of her youth, had yet retained enough of her freshness and bloom to satisfy her indomitable sister, and entitle her to the dress of victory.

She was but the frail memory of her former self, yet her youth clung to her still, and she, too, as she shook hands with him, looked at Mark with Josephine's eyes, but blue and restful of mood.

The room, he thought, was the brightest place he had ever seen, furnished and hung with delicate patterns and colours, and the brightness culminated in the quiet figure on the couch with the serene eyes.

"Child," she said, keeping hold of her niece's hand and drawing her down to the low chair at her side, "sit here close by me, and you, Mr Tennant, take my father's chair

at the foot there. It is the place of honour for my visitors. I can see them best so. I was not quite well when you came before, but to-day I almost think I could walk."

And there was so cheery a sound in her voice, and so much life in her manner, that, but for the exceeding delicacy of her face, and for the remembrance of Josephine's description of her, he had almost forgotten that she was an invalid. He looked at her reverently. There was no shadow of querulousness, no hint of complaint, nothing but a pervading and radiant peace. "How peaceful it is!" he exclaimed involuntarily, with a flush. He was reproaching himself for his momentary unwillingness to enter.

"Yes," said Miss Ann, "everybody says so. I think it is that the sunsets live in this room—perhaps, too, that sentence has something to do with it," she pointed to the window. "My nephew Jim painted it up there for me."

Above the window, in quaint gold lettering, ran this sentence, one word in it altered, from

the book of the Pilgrim—"And they laid the pilgrim in a large upper chamber which opened towards the *sun-setting*, and the name of the chamber was Peace."

"Aunt Ann, you are a dear old fraud," interrupted the girl at her side, laying the thin hand to her cheek, "*she* chose the verse, and she is the pilgrim, and where she is, is Peace."

And Mark, even after those few minutes, believed her. He felt wonderfully at ease already in this upper chamber. In the higher atmosphere of her long sickness the sufferer had risen above formalities. She made those who visited her at home—and at once. And Mark pleased her. His air of vitality and the manly openness of his expression attracted her. She had her own standard for men and women, and she silently measured her visitors by it. She was thinking that she recognised in him the signs of a clean conscience and an upright life. "Joseph Bentham has not been mistaken in his estimate of him," she said to herself. And Mark, turning from the words

of gold and the fine view of Stapleton Hill and village, met the steady scrutiny in some surprise. But the searching eyes flooded with so sudden and motherly a smile that his heart opened to her.

When Josephine had left the room, after making her Aunt laugh at the last eccentricities and irascibilities of old Thomas, he found himself, self-contained as he was, speaking freely on all manner of subjects, and throughout he was sensible of Miss Ann's sympathy and comprehension. It appeared to him that, though her body was tied to her couch, her happy spirit went everywhere abroad. Nor at any time did she reveal a sign of the native distrust of strangers. She was alive to passing events, and interested in them, and showed a larger liberty in discussing them than he could have expected from her antecedents.

In a pause in the conversation he detected the White House at the foot of the hill opposite. He remembered, with a smile, the tale of the Dewhirsts.

"What amuses you?" asked Miss Ann. And he told her. She laughed.

"Yes, Thomas never forgets anything. He is a record of our sins and our few virtues. But, for that matter, I don't forget our behaviour to those poor Dewhirsts either. It really was mean of us. Thomas would not see that; he is idolatrous where Rachel is concerned, and he puts Josephine on the same pedestal. I have no doubt he wearied you by long histories of our tricks and break-neck doings."

"He certainly did not weary me," said Mark simply; "but, speaking of break-neck doings, do you approve of your niece's way of passing continually backwards and forwards over that shattered bridge?"

"Is it really unsafe?" she asked anxiously.

"Very, I think." He spoke decidedly.

Miss Ann considered a moment, the faint shade of alarm vanished.

"I have great faith, you know," she rejoined, "in her absolutely healthy poise, and in nature's training of her. The things that

child has done, and the places where she has been! But, of course, I can see that nothing could keep her from accident on a falling bridge. I will speak to her."

"Please don't bring me in, Miss Ringby," he begged. "I don't think she likes interference—and——"

Miss Ann's mouth twitched, "and I won't betray you," she said.

Mark was amazed at her tranquillity. He had immediately reproached himself for entering upon such a subject with her in her weak and helpless state, but beyond the first moment she had shown no alarm.

"You have not much fear for her evidently," he began.

Miss Ann's eyes lightened with a gentle humour.

"No, not much, and then, as I said, I shall speak to her. Josephine never hurts those she loves. She would give up anything for me or her father, though she herself does not know what fear is. And we must take care of her, for she is the very light of our eyes.

I sometimes wonder whether we look after her enough. I am tied here, and Joseph is, I fear, not strong," she finished slowly and rather sadly, and lay still, pondering.

Mark did not answer, he had not even heard the last sentence. Something in the previous words, or the tone of them, had awakened an immediate and swift intuition. Yes, she was that to him, *the light of his eyes!*

He had been so absolutely happy in a kind of charmed existence that he had never sought to analyse his feeling. Perhaps he had half-consciously refused to analyse it. But now it had mastered him beyond possibility of mistake, and with an emotion, part joy, part anguish, he acknowledged it. In the few moments of silence which followed he passed to a condition which seemed always to have been his. Not only was he sure that he had loved her from the first, but he felt that he must have known of her always, and had been waiting for her all his life. But she, had she waited for him?

He pushed his chair back into the enlarging

shadow of the ivy, and sat there, his head throbbing and his heart beating tumultuously.

Before Miss Ann roused herself from her reverie, Josephine opened the door. She came in like the summer's queen, her arms full of flowers and leafy branches; a trail of honeysuckle, which would encumber Madam Ringby's path no more, had been flung over her shoulder and had clasped her neck. She wore the lilac dress of the memorable dance, and the westering sun played upon her and her flowers.

"How dreadfully quiet you both are, Aunt Ann!"

The invalid came out of her muse with an effort.

"Well, darling," she said, "we shall probably be wide awake enough now!"

Mark sprang up to close the door which Josephine was too laden to shut. As he came forward, the light from the southern window revealed the new expression of his eyes. There was in them a troubled and passionate intensity. The flowers which she had borne

so triumphantly scattered on the floor. She stamped her foot petulantly.

"Silly things," she said, "to tumble about like that, when I carried you without losing a leaf from the other end of the garden!"

As he helped her to gather them up their hands touched. A thrill shot through him, but she drew herself away hastily and began to fill the great jar on the table near Miss Ann with flowers, her back turned to him.

"I was telling Mr Tennant what an improper and fearless creature you are," said her aunt.

"And that so shocked you both, that you hadn't another word to say. Now I understand." She stepped back to see the effect of her grouping. "But did you tell him that I am horribly afraid of dogs sometimes? If they show any unusual or unpleasant symptom, I always think they may be going mad. I can't tell you how I dread the thought of that. To be bitten and to die—such a death!" The girl looked round at them with a gesture of horror.

"It is the most natural fear in the world," said Mark eagerly, "everybody has it. Why, I remember when a mad dog rushed at my little sister, all the people about, even her own nurse, fled as if they were possessed."

"And she?" Josephine asked breathlessly. The young man changed colour.

"She was saved," he said shortly, "by a—a man who happened to be coming down the steps of a house near. He choked the brute off."

"Not with his hands!"

Mark stammered, "Yes, I—I believe he did. It was nothing," he went on hurriedly, "he couldn't let her be bitten, and he was strong enough in the arms."

"Nothing!" she exclaimed indignantly. "How can you say so? How can you be so——" she stopped, struck by his embarrassment, "Mr Tennant," she cried, "was it you?"

"I had to do something," he answered, hot and uncomfortable. He was a genuinely modest man, and had not foreseen the end

of this desire to find excuse for her one timidity. Miss Ann's cheek burnt.

"You are a brave man," she said; and as she spoke the spirit of her youth was upon her.

But Josephine was silent. Her large eyes deepened and darkened with feeling, and were fastened on Mark.

Her aunt watched her closely. Then a little tremulous smile flickered over the girl's face, and in a low and shaken voice she said—

"It was almost too brave, you might have been killed." And for the rest of the time in that upper chamber she occupied herself in arranging her flowers without a word.

And next morning, when she found that he had crushed his thumb over-night between the clumsy oar and the rowlock, and that it had become purple and inflamed, she bound it in wet bandages to the tune of a quite motherly lecture, in which she assured him that foolhardiness was of all folly the worst. It was ridiculous to hide suffering which could so quickly have been eased. "Women," she

said, "are not so, they take no pride in the vain bearing of pain. A woman would have come to Jane or to me at once, and there would have been no such dreadful thumb as this." Mark ought to have regretted this declension from that Spartan courage which he had heard her extol, but his bearing was blithe all day with a singular gladness, and the earth was bright for him with the beauty of Eden.

Two nights afterwards, he had been reading late and was busily preparing for his work of the morrow, when he heard steps on the gravel outside. He leaned out of his window into the early June night, fragrant and luminous, and caught a glimpse of a grey figure creeping stealthily round the corner of the house. A moment later it stole back, and seemed to him to enter at the French window below to the left. Yet, when he went softly down into the library, all was still, and the deep silence of the house was undisturbed by a sound. The next day he mentioned the matter to Jane, who had for some time taken him into her good graces, and had decided

that he was worthy of more lenient treatment. But she was absolutely incredulous, and sent him away with this Parthian shaft, "that them as mazes themselves with books and studying when decent folk are in their beds, always see more nor there is to see." And the next night she appeared at his room door with a cup of steaming herb-tea, a febrifuge. "That'll maybe cool your brains," she said, nor would she leave his room until it was swallowed.

He was away the next two days, and then came another of those evenings of Paradise, when the earth and the heavens rejoiced with him in the presence of Josephine. His love of "Robin Adair" was a joke with the young people of the next generation, but if they had heard her sing it, sitting in her white dress under the cedar on the lawn, they might have envied him his memories.

Again his work took him to some distance, and it was late in the week when he returned. He found the Squire at Norton, and Josephine had been summoned to Stapleton to help "th'

old lady with the School-treat ; they always hold it at the Hall," said Jane, "but you can go and welcome." Unfortunately he had so much to communicate to the Railway Committee, that it was impossible for him to finish his writing until late. He took a stroll down to the river, and found it rapid and tawny with the heavy rain of the morning and the previous day.

"I am glad I spoke strongly about that old bridge," he reflected, "it's about as nasty a thing as one could have for accidents." He walked round the house to the front, comparing its pretentious entrance and facing of stone unfavourably with the mellow tints of the untouched red brick at the back. Hobbling down the drive came Thomas Bates.

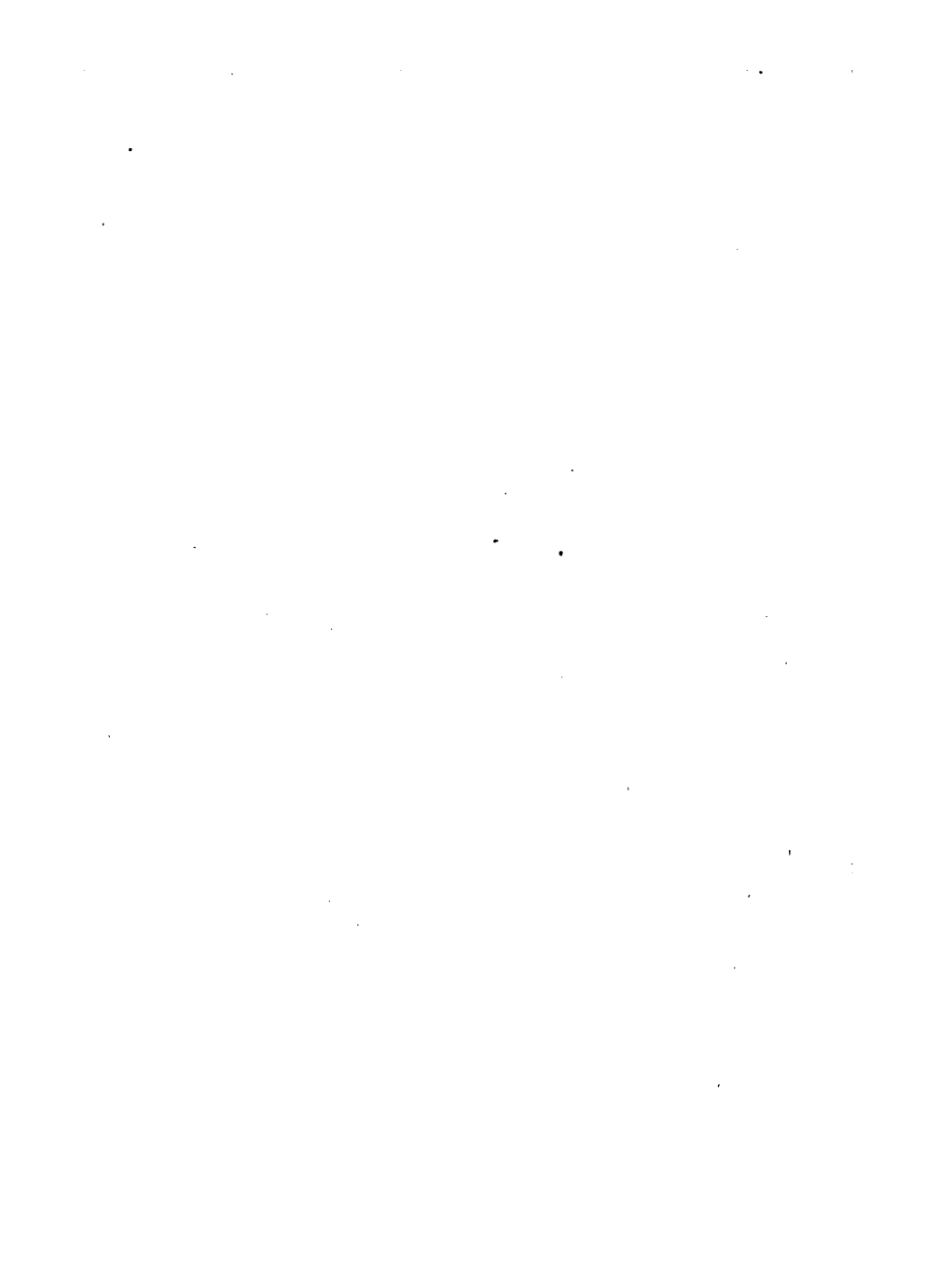
"Ah've been fotchin' my bit o' baccy fro th' 'ouse," he said as Mark joined him, "t' Squoire gits it me somewheers i' Norton. But *Ab* pays for't mysen," he hastened to add. "Ah've addled¹ my brass mysen, an' Ah can pay for t' stuff reight enuff."

¹addle—to earn.



95

Putting the bees
in mourning.



"Of course," said the young man; "and are you stronger since the warm weather set in?"

"Ay, Ah think Ah'm middlin'. Ah've walked fower mile sin nooin, an' Ah sud ha' been for my baccy afore, but Ah wor at Ned Binn's buryin', an' we'd t' bees to put i' mournin'."

"The bees?" echoed his astonished listener.

"Ay t' bees, for sure! Didn't yo' know that? Doänt them Lunnoners tell t' bees an' give 'em a tääste?"

"I don't believe they do; but, you see, there are no bees where I was born, at any rate there are no beehives."

"Why lad, whativer would t' bees do if yo' didn't put 'em i' mournin'? They'd be that mad while they'd dee. Na, Ah'll tell yo' what. Yo' can goa wi' me to t' big ga-ate an' Ah'll tell yo', then yo'll happen know. We ties a bit o' cra-äpe on th' hive. Ah call it havin' a proper respec' for th' animals. An' we gives 'em a tääste o' t' buryin' feast, iverything 'at wor on th' table. Yo' sud ha'

seen Ned's Sarah, that's his wife, it ud ha' done yo' gooid. Hoo went that solemn and hoo says, 'Ned Binns he's dee-äd, an' his son's t' maister na. He's sent yo' a bite an' sup of whatever wor on th' table, an' Ah hopes yo'll be pleeäsed.'¹ Ah telled Nancy she mun do it i' t' saäme way when Ah'm goän'."

"This Yorkshire is certainly the most remarkable place in England," ejaculated Mark, no less astonished by the old man's calm and unmoved reference to his own death, than by the extraordinary story he had listened to.

"Yo're reight theer. Ah reckon yo've leärnt a deal sin Ah seed yo' on t' brigg, haven't yo'?" insisted Thomas, peering up sharply at him.

"Yes," the young man answered, smiling, his eyes wandering from the aged face to the distant curve of Stapleton hill.

There was at times a divining spirit in

¹ This custom, though fast dying out, is still met with in the East and North Ridings.

Thomas; he straightened himself until his mouth was on a level with the other's ear.

"Do yo' think it's true what Ah telled yo' then?" he said, in a strange penetrating voice. "Do yo' think it's true 'at 'a Ringby lass maks a lad's content'?"

Mark started angrily, but there was something so kind and serious in the astute blue eyes near his own, that he was disarmed.

He regarded the old labourer steadily for a minute, then he shook the hard and stiffened hand.

"I have learnt that," he said hoarsely.

The keen gaze softened, "An' Ah cud like her to think thee t' lad, but hoo mun pleeäse hersen, choose how, tha knaws." He drew out the great red pocket-handkerchief, and, blowing his nose loudly, shuffled quickly down the last few yards of the drive, and left Mark standing alone.

Mark finished the evening in his room, his eyes fixed on vacancy and his hands deep in his pockets. He was asking himself for the hundredth time if Josephine cared for him.

his arms above his head. The decision arrived at, he was in a mood for sleep.

His hand was on the blind when a whistle sounded clear from beyond the meadow. His faculties were sharpened on the instant, he remembered the occurrence of that other night. In spite of the driving rain he threw up the sash, and gazed intently into the garden. The cedar on the lawn creaked and flung up its heavy branches to the sky, and the smaller trees tossed dismally to and fro. Again he heard the whistle, but fainter, the wind blowing to a gale. Immediately below the window to his left stood the grey-cloaked and hooded figure; he leaned out yet further to see more distinctly. At the same moment the moon emerged from the hurrying scud, and her light fell upon a white and apprehensive face beneath, turned to the window of Jane's room, just above the library. Mark drew hastily back into the half shadow of the curtain—he had seen Josephine.

A few moments and he looked out again. She was running swiftly up the slope, keep-

ing close to the wall; then the moon was hidden, and he could see her for a second on the top of the meadow, a blur of deeper darkness on the dark. He stood amazed. The whistle, the frightened eyes, the careful keeping to the shadow of the wall, added to her unexpected return, stunned him for a moment. He was inclined to think that his senses had misled him. That shrinking figure, pale and phantasmal in the elusive light, was not his radiant Goddess of the Spring! But he could only find a temporary refuge. He doggedly chose the blank of thought, all the more because of those leaping surmises which struggled to enter.

And after all, they were too strong for him; they were crowding in upon him when he heard a mere hint of sound outside, which brought his head to the casement. It was a repetition of the other night. Along the path stole the gliding figure, and, pausing an instant at the library, and casting a swift glance upwards, disappeared within.

It was horrible to him to see that cautious

stealth in her, his queen of light and freedom. He lighted a candle, and set himself down to think. By the clock on the mantelpiece it was nearly a quarter past twelve.

What could possibly have brought her home in such weather? and what conceivable reason took her out again in the midnight and the storm? He could imagine her fearless spirit responding at any hour to the call of duty, but she would most assuredly go with her head high and the light step of her innocent heart. He shrank at the remembrance of those eyes of fear, and of the way of her going, her choosing the shadows for a path!

Suddenly a groan broke from him. Who had dared to whistle for her? And where was the living man that she should obey at that hour?

He pulled himself up quickly, pushing the table from him with a force that nearly overthrew the candle.

"No," he said aloud, as if addressing another, "you shall not be a villain, you shall

at least not prejudge her and disgrace yourself by suspecting her of unworthiness ; that I can help, and I will."

With the strength of a strong mind he began work again, writing hard until the east brightened with the primrose of the dawn. Then he threw himself on his bed, and slept until the breakfast bell sounded, waking with that sick sense of misery with which we come to consciousness on a day of sorrow. Hurriedly dressing, he found Mr Bentham pulling off his gloves in the hall, and glowing with his rapid drive through the morning air. The storm had been succeeded by a brilliant day. As Thomas would have said, he was "i' grand fettle," and he greeted his guest with a hearty fatherly cordiality.

A heavy shadow lay on Mark's face. Whilst dressing it had struck him that the whistle might have been the Squire's way of summoning Dick, but his appearance now, and his apology for being detained all night at Norton, put this solution out of the question.

As they came into the cheerful dining-

room, where Josephine was lifting a covered dish from the hearth, the Squire scanned the young man's face curiously.

"So this is true what I hear from Jane," he said, kissing his daughter. "Not content with working all day; you 'tew' hard all night. Nay man, don't deny it, your face tells its own tale. You're as peaked and heavy-eyed as possible, isn't he, Josephine?"

Josephine, busy with the coffee-cups, glanced at him with a smile. His pallor startled her.

"You really are not well," she said anxiously; "you are, as father says, 'peaked,' and I think *pined* too. Did they give you no supper?"

"I am well enough, thank you," he answered indifferently, taking his seat at the table and caressing Jock, who smelt kidneys, and was ingratiating himself with everybody in turn, his wounded foot still bandaged and held stiff as a twig.

The girl looked at him in surprise; she felt there was an atmosphere of resentment or at least of coldness about him, which made him

a totally different person. The Squire looked from one to the other.

“And you, my dear child,” he said dryly, “do Grannie’s festivities sit so heavily upon you that they rob you of your roses? Upon my word, the young people of these days have no more constitution than a canary! When I was your age I could ride all day and dance all night, and be as ‘wick¹ as a Jackdaw’ in the morning.”

Josephine made a little grimace.

“But, father, you never had to entertain seven curates. Think of it—seven! What Grannie was thinking of I can’t imagine; she had collected them from all parts. Two of them I like, Mr Denton and Mr Farrar; though she says that the one is a Jesuit and the other a Methodist, they are manly, pleasant men. But the other five! they were so tedious and so colourless! Three of them ought to have been sewing samplers, and the two youngest were unhappy school-boys who wriggled when Grannie talked to them.”

¹wick—lively.

"My dear, you haven't a particle of reverence!"

"Indeed I have; you know how I venerate Mr Savile; he is the rector of Stapleton, Mr Tennant"—Mark inclined his head slightly—"and the only way I could keep myself in anything like charity to the five curates was by remembering that *he* once was one. I told him so."

"And when did you get back?" asked her father.

"O, I was late," she answered lightly. "Jim drove me over about ten o'clock. There were some things I wanted to do; to give you your breakfast for one; I was afraid that wretched agricultural show would keep you over-night. Jim said he didn't mind when he got back to Norton; a cousin is almost as convenient as a brother."

Mark watched her closely. There was no hesitation in the clear voice, and not a trace of confusion in the sweet frank eyes.

The Squire rubbed his chin, a habit he had when he was disturbed or annoyed.

"I wish you could persuade Jim to sell out and take his place at Stapleton as his fathers did before him," he said. "He is living an idle and expensive life, and leaving everything to his bailiff, a miserable plan, I think. With your grandfather and your uncle both gone, he ought to feel it his duty to settle down at the old place. He always listened to you, Josephine, and I should like you to show him what he ought to do."

Josephine flushed. She looked at Mark, and her colour deepened. "I think I will leave Master Jim to you," she said, rising and nodding at her father, "and now I have to go back to Stapleton. I promised Grannie to put the silver away for her ; she gave a resplendent supper after the school children left. My belief is, that she thinks Mr Denton stole some spoons ; she was very angry with me for liking him, and told me that high-church men had no morals."

She looked back, half-way to the door. "I don't need to apologise for going, I know. You, father, live at Norton, and for days Mr

Tennant has only honoured us by occasionally lodging here," she smiled with merry malice at Mark.

But he showed none of his usual eager responsiveness. Rising and opening the door for her, he let her pass without a word. She was evidently troubled, and paused as if to speak. The still formality of his expression intimidated her, and, changing her intention, she ran hastily upstairs.

Both men were at the front door as she came down in her wide hat and daintily sprigged cambric, and her beauty struck the younger of the two with actual pain. While Mr Bentham made some enquiries of the groom, Josephine went up to Mark. Her cheek was crimson and in her eye was a touch of disquiet, but her manner was friendly as ever.

"If you can get away from that precious surveying, Mr Tennant," she said, "I thought we might ride over to Norton and fetch some wool for Aunt Ann. The dear pilgrim has knitted twenty comforters and a half, and

that half lies heavy on her mind. I can be home by four."

There was an unusual appeal in her voice, and the sight of her in her dawn-brightness and sweetness, mingled with the recollection of the past night, wrought bitterness in him. Out of his love swelled a deep resentment.

"Thank you," he spoke with studied deliberation. "I shall have business to attend to, I fear, when I return—if I return early, and," he went on yet more icily, "I am sure you don't need me, you have no doubt many cavaliers who would be charmed to accompany you." In his anger a slight sneer crept into the last half of the sentence. The girl stared at him as if she had not heard him aright. Then the crimson of her cheek died and the warmth of her eye went out.

In a tone if possible colder and more deliberate than his own, and looking carelessly away from him, she said—

"O, please don't trouble to arrange an escort for me! Jock and I are always *quite* sufficient for each other, and shall no doubt

manage happily enough to-day." She pressed her lips tightly together, and moved away with a proud and indifferent air.

But as her father put her into the dog-cart, she whispered in a voice too low for Mark to catch, "Come home early, father darling, if possible, I shall want you very much." As the trap swept round the curve of the drive the Squire rubbed his chin again in a worried way, muttering half to himself, "That child is at everybody's beck and call, I will put a stop to it."

Mark, absolutely unhappy, went with his host to the stables and saw him ride away, making some excuse for his own unusual delay. Work that day was an impossibility to him. For the moment, he did not care in the least whether the projected line was abandoned or completed. Railways were a delusion, and surveying the most futile and wearisome of occupations. Now that he had given expression to his resentment, the fates had left him the prey not only of misery, but remorse. To leave Melhams for the day was

pain, to remain was torture, and, strange choice, he preferred torture. All the morning he wandered about the garden and the village, alternately maddened by surmises concerning Josephine's behaviour of the past night, and paroxysms of self-reproach. Left to himself and his own dolorous company, he arrived at the despairing conclusion that, even if the mysterious circumstances admitted of explanation, she would never, being what she was, forgive the manner of his speech that morning.

He had been for three weeks in a celestial fairy-land. Its gift for him was a love, that, young as it was, had become part of himself, nay, was himself. With the crowd of nestling loves which had lately thronged his heart the angels had entered. He had found himself striving to reach the hill-top, where, he was confident, she habitually walked. His mind had at no time been the resort of evil thoughts and imaginations, but of late he had turned from the door every visitor of a doubtful kind. And now, it seemed to him, that he sat with

his robbed and desolate love amongst the ruins of his life.

He determined to pay a farewell visit to Mrs Sykes of the Old Cock, and quite harrowed her feelings by his absence of mind, though, indeed, he roused himself to play with Jane Elizabeth, and listened patiently to her father's complaints of Lord Scarthorpe, his landlord. When he left, the good woman went "a piece" down the road with him, and shaking his hand with warm affectionateness, besought him to give up "that surveyin'," which she was sure would wear him to fiddle-strings. It was a kind of business, she had noticed, very hostile to regular meals and to proper hours of sleep—"though, beggin' t' Squire's pardon an' Miss Joseyphine's, yo' looked a deal heartier an' fuller i' t' faäce, when yo' wor at th' Ould Cock," which was quite true.

On his return to Melhams he found that neither the Squire nor his daughter had come back, and he set off for a brisk walk over the moors. His mind was still incapable of work.

As he took his hat from its peg in the hall, Jane came in. She faced him for a moment in silence, her straight thin features relaxing their usual sternness.

"I wish you'd give over them night study-ins, Mr Tennant, they'll end in making you an old man before you're a young 'un. You'll soon be leaving us, and you'll forgive an old woman for speaking plain. And the Squire and Miss Joseyphine bothers a deal about it, I can see."

Her unusual tenderness touched Mark, and was a shadowy comfort to his worried and troubled mind.

"I don't think it bothers Miss Josephine much," he said sadly.

The housekeeper looked aghast. Such a tone and manner meant something serious. She held the hall door open for him, staring after him with a bewildered air, and at last shut it with a bang.

"Nay," she said, falling into unmitigated dialect, "theer's lasses at's daft-heäds, but for bein' blind, and deeäf an' a fooil i't' bargain,

gie me a lad ! Eh, but Ah thowt he'd moor sense nor that. Weel, he s'all find it out for hissel. I doänt 'old wi' helpin' a laäme dog over t' stile when marryin's i' t' wind. We want na laäme dogs i' oor fam'ly."

She met him again when he came back, tired out from his solitary tramp, and told him that Mr Bentham was staying in Norton until the morning, and Miss Josephine had gone to bed with a bad headache. There was a distinct defiance in her manner, and she wasted few words upon him.

"Your candle's here," she said, "and you'll kindly make as little noise as you can, so as you don't waken her," and, with a curt "good-night," she left him.

A few minutes after she brought to his door a plate of sandwiches and a glass of wine, "and be sure you eat them," she added, relenting a little at the sight of his tired face.

Within her own room she stopped in the act of taking off her cap, and drawing its purple strings absently between her finger and thumb, stood pondering and perplexed.

"He's noän a bad un," she meditated, dividing her words by little pauses of "studyin'." "An' Ah never thowt him a fooil while to-day. An' shoo's niver had a headache sin her mother died! Ah'm feared it's more like heartache nor headache, Ah cannot bide 'at shoo sud suffer, bless her bonnie een! Folks dunnot know what luv theer is i' them proud uns. But Ah darsen't mell¹ wi' it. Folk melled wi' me an' Harry Sykes an' Ah's niver forget, ould as Ah am. But for them, he'd happen ha' staäyed at hoäm an Ah sudn't ha' been t' naggin' an' worrytin' body Ah am to-day." The old woman laid her cap on the bed, and unbuttoned her ample black apron. By the time this was rolled up her thoughts had brightened. Putting it into a drawer with her cap and the broad gold brooch containing Mrs Bentham's hair, she ended, "Theer, let's wait while t' morn. Day-leet brings mony a clearin-oop and t' dark allus maks t' warst waur."²

¹ darsen't mell—dare not meddle.

² waur—worse.

Mark fell asleep at once. Misery weighs down the eyelids as well as the heart; we wake with anxiety but we sleep with sorrow. He awoke in an hour's time roused by voices outside his door, and there was a dim echo of a whistle in his brain. Then silence, and again, but further off, the voices, and a door clashed below. He threw on his clothes and rushed out through the passage to the head of the stairs. At the open hall-door stood Josephine in a long white wrapper, her father's grey travelling-cloak falling back from her shoulders. By her side, grasping the cloak, stood Jane, imploring her with tears not to go out.

"Dunnot, my darling, dunnot go, let me see abaht it, happen it's all a mistake. Eh, Ah cannot fashion to let yo' go."

"Jane, take your hands from my cloak this moment, how dare you stop me? Let go!" she said imperiously, and she tore the folds out of the old woman's detaining hands and fled from the door. Jane broke into a sob, she stood irresolute for a second, but taking a

sudden decision, was on the point of following when her arm was grasped roughly from behind.

Intent upon making no noise, she stifled the scream which rose to her lips.

"How dare you let her go?" came immediately and furiously from a man at her side. She recognised Mark. He shook her in his anger. "You wicked woman, why didn't you prevent her? I don't care who the man is!"

He had one idea—that Josephine was gone. He did not even observe Jane's distress.

The old housekeeper's spirit rose, and in the dusk her eye fired with scorn. "Man!" she repeated, "tha girt¹ gauby, tha doesn't know gowld when tha sees it. Eh, if Ah wor a man, tha wouldn't see me stickin' 'ere. Go," she pushed him down the step into the summer night, "go an' help her if tha's fit for owt."

Such was his bewilderment that he scarcely noticed the unparalleled rudeness of her words.

¹ girt or gurt—great.

Absolutely ignorant of Josephine's errand, the exhortation to help her had in it a heart of promise which winged his feet. There was no leisure to think—his faculties were bent on reaching her and on nothing else. The garden gate swung noisily to and fro behind him, the moon riding high in the unclouded heavens bathed the landscape in an enchanted light. To his mind, he and the flying figure which now emerged from the wall's black shadow at the head of the field, were cut off from the living world, and were racing through a white infinity. And he was conscious that he was glad of the isolation, if he could but overtake her. He reached the top. Between the flowing silver of the swollen river and himself she sped down the hill, her cloak flying behind her, and her dress fluttering in the wind of her going.

He began to gain on her when she suddenly stopped, threw out her hands with a repelling gesture, and cried aloud in a piteous voice. She was shouting to some one. The words floated back to him.

"Go back, go back, father, don't cross—remember—the bridge."

On the further side of the gap in the bridge stood Mr Bentham. In the dazzling moonlight his tall broad figure was perfectly recognisable. Josephine, still shouting, flew to the water's edge, Mark close behind her. The Squire waved his hand, "All right, quite safe," he called to them, and he jumped. The masonry, loosened by the violent rains of the day before, gave way, there was a crash, a cry, and a heavy splash.

Mark heard the girl's scream; he saw her trying to unfasten her cloak, and he guessed her intention. Before she had unclasped it, he was in the water.

The river widened into a great curve at the ford, and, though running high, was much less deep than in the middle. A few yards lower down it swept dark and fast through its narrowing channel. Mr Bentham was being carried round the curve and had not reached the swirl. Though impeded by his clothing, Mark struck out vigorously, making for the

corner of the bank, and yet keeping out of the race of the water. He reached the turn just as the body of the Squire was swept against the side before being whirled down the channel. Catching at a young birch that overhung the river, and grasping the clothes of the drowning man, Mark held him hard against the bank. The water already gathered force at this point, and the effort required of him was immense.

But Josephine was not of the kind whose energies fail at need. She was kneeling upon the soaked and slippery bank, her arm round the white stem of the birch. She gripped the collar of her father's coat, and, thus raising his head, pulled him, with Mark's help, up the incline, and held him there. In another moment Mark was beside her. Together they drew him out of the water, and with difficulty laid him on the grassy top of the bank. For the first time Josephine spoke.

"Is he, is he—" she could not pronounce the awful word. She looked up at Mark

with eyes whose despairing anguish brought the tears to his own.

"I think he is only stunned," he said gently. "He probably hit his head against the bridge, but I will be back as soon as possible. You are not afraid to be left, Josephine?" The tone of his voice was a caress, but neither he nor she noticed it. She shook her head.

"No, oh no, only be quick." To be quick was almost an impossibility, clogged and hampered as he was by his sodden clothes; but he did his best. The girl took her cloak and folded it under the poor head, and wiped the water from the rigid face. As he looked back on his way to Dick's cottage he saw her rubbing her father's hands.

In the shortest possible time he was back with Dick and Ben and some of the other men. Even in his intense anxiety he was conscious of a hot shame almost overpowering the joy which comprehension had brought with it. How could he ever have doubted her, unworthy wretch that he was!

As he came in sight of her she was bending over the prostrate figure ; she seemed to be speaking. His heart leapt within him. She was certainly speaking, and there was a faint answer. Coming nearer he saw that the Squire's eyes were open. Josephine had bound her handkerchief round his temples, and it was profusely stained with blood. Mark was right, he had struck his head in falling, and had been stunned.

"In a minute, father darling," said the indescribably tender voice. "Here they come, and you will soon be at home."

Her whole aspect had changed ; her face was transfigured by a melting gratitude and love.

"He fainted," she said, as the young man stood by them, drenched, and stained with the wet soil of the bank. "You were right, and very soon he will be himself again, won't you, dear?"

The Squire's eyes were fixed on Mark ; he was greatly exhausted, but he summoned all his strength to say—

"It was you who saved me, how can I thank you?" and his weak fingers closed on Mark's hand.

When he was being carried homewards, with the repentant Dick bewailing his wickedness behind with much profanity, and assuring himself that "he'd niver takken a wink afore, niver, and would ha' been cut oop i' bits," rather than bring such an accident to his master, Josephine found herself all at once without strength. As she afterwards said, she was afraid she was going to disgrace herself by hysterics, but the only sign of weakness that Mark saw was her ready willingness to take his wet arm in their climb up the hill. His heart beat fast with the joy of her dependence upon him, compulsory though it was.

"I feel so stupidly shaky, and my feet are not my feet at all," she said, excusing herself. She seemed to have entirely forgotten the occurrence of the morning, and to find comfort in confiding all her late anxiety to him as they plodded up the field. And Mark's heart smote him as he listened to her.

"Every night of this last week," she said, "I have been so miserably afraid for him. This agricultural show business has kept him too late. He hates sleeping away from home, and I have expected him to get a fall on that bridge every night. I think I must have had a presentiment. He always whistles for Dick, but one couldn't be quite sure that Dick would hear him. And I dared say nothing to Jane, there would have been a fuss, and father would have been terribly annoyed.

"Couldn't you have spoken to me? I would have done any mortal thing for you or him," said Mark reproachfully. There was the faintest pressure from the hand that lay on his arm.

"He would have been angry if you had *done* anything," she said simply, "that has been the one trouble. I did what I could. Every night until I heard him go to his room, or until twelve o'clock struck, that being Dick's limit, I have been in a fever, and I have run out at the last minute to see if he was coming. Last night," she shuddered,

"Oh, it was dreadful! There was a whistle, I never stopped to think if it was father's, besides, you can't discriminate when you are so anxious. He was not there, as you know, but there was a horrid ruffianly looking fellow by the river — poaching, perhaps — and he chased me." There was a violent exclamation from her companion, and he held her arm more closely to his side.

"Oh, I can run very fast," she said with a little laugh that nearly broke down, "and it was all right, only it made me more afraid for father. If he had seen the man and had got excited, he might have had one of those attacks! Last night, too, I heard a noise in your room or Jane's, just as I came out of the library window, and my heart jumped into my mouth. And now this has happened! But to see him alive has made me so full of thankfulness and joy, that I can think of nothing else, nothing except that you saved him; for that no words can thank you, Mr Tennant."

Mark's soaking garments were not weighing as heavily upon him as his sense of shame.

He exaggerated a distrust which, after all, he had fought against to the end, and Josephine rose in her courageous love hopelessly out of his reach. Yet, that she should be what she was, lifted him above the mere personal considerations; he revelled in the thought that she more than justified his love for her, though she might never return it. On reaching the house she became conscious of the wet sleeve, and impetuously hurried him in, detaining him, however, at the foot of the stairs, a faint shadow dimming the serene gratitude of her face.

“We shall be friends again, shall we not?” she said, half timidly. “I don’t know what it all meant, but after to-night we must be friends.”

“Friends!” exclaimed the young man, almost too moved for speech, lifting her hand to his lips, “if you only knew!”

At noon next day Melhams was quiet again. The stir of the night and early morning had died away. The Squire had slept, and, though weak, was better, and the doctor



assured Josephine that, with rest, he would before long be fairly well again. Jane sat by his bedside, her eyes red with weeping ; her really kind heart could not forgive herself for her treatment last night of the man who had saved her master. She had even humbled herself to ask his forgiveness, and his manner of receiving the apology had gone far to win her affections.

Josephine was in the garden gathering roses. At nineteen one may go through agonies at night and look fresh as a chaffinch in the morning. She had not seen Mark since they parted at the stair's foot, and she was remembering with sadness that he had but two days more at Melhams. As she crossed a corner of the lawn to the damask rose-bush, he came out of the green door leading into the yard. He shut it hastily, being a good deal disturbed by the ovation he had just received at the stables ; it really distressed him to hear his act of the night before referred to.

His head was bare and the sun touched the

clustering hair on his forehead with gold. He saw Josephine, and came to her straight across the grass.

In the hours since they parted he had reverted to his old decision. She might not love him, might, indeed, care for some one else, Jim Ringby or young Mr Ibbetson of Sandal, but if ever man owed homage to a woman he did. A warm stillness lay on the fields and garden, the blinds of the house were down, and there was only Josephine to be seen in the whole sunlit world.

As she came forward to meet him, in her white dress, unheeding her "Good morning," he took both her hands in their gardening gloves into his own, "Josephine," he said, drawing her under the cedar, "forgive me if I am abrupt, but I cannot wait." The beautiful brave eyes sank. She attempted to speak, but he was so intent upon his purpose, that he gave her no opportunity, "I want to ask you a question," he went on. "Do you think that you could ever care for me? for I love you, Josephine, I have always

loved you, from the first day I saw you—you are far above me as the sky—” his voice faltered, and he was very pale.

There was so true a modesty in his bearing, and so wistful a question in his eye, that the girl took heart. Her shyness fled. She released her hands from his, and laid them lightly on his shoulders. Her luminous eyes shone bright through tears. “Dear,” she said, and the young man trembled, “I don’t know whether I ever *could*, but,” she hesitated, and the rosy colour swept up to her hair, “but I *did*, and I do.”

And for the next hour place was not, and time was not, Love was there, and Love alone.

JACK

HE stood in the "Laädy's Cove."

"It's mighty queer," he muttered. He shifted from one foot to the other.

"It's mighty queer," he said louder, and pushed his sou'wester back till the light curls on his forehead stood out from it like a fringe. His eyes stared gloomily at the incoming sea.

"Why disn't he tell me what's t' matter? Why cannot he speäk?"

The black cormorant upon the rock in the middle of the cove fixed its keen eye on his face.

"Ay, they're awful knowin', them corm'rants," he said, noting the stillness of the bird's gaze. "That feller sees that there's summat wrang wi' me." His mouth worked like an injured child's.

"If he'd speäk oop," he began, and

stopped. For, as they say in Lofthus, the fishing village with the ruddy roofs behind the cove, he really "suspicioned" the matter, and was "fair stagnated" at the turn of affairs.

Briefly, it was this. His brother Frank, ten years older than himself, coming second in the Cammish family of seven sons,—his hero, and the protector of his childish years,—had gone about with a fierce and sullen face for three weeks past, vouchsafing neither kindly word nor smile to the lad. The reason of the change had dawned upon Jack's simple soul a week ago. He had fought against the truth, but he was too candid and primitive to let inclination mislead him.

And that morning, coming in from "crabbing," his father, Will Cammish, shrewd of eye, whose words were few, had looked at him with a curious solicitude which had caught his attention.

"Down wi' t' saäl, lad," the old fisherman shouted, as, with the shaking tiller in his hand, he gave the boat her last turn to

the shore. When the wet folds lay heaped at the bottom, and Jack took the oars to bring her into shallow water, Will began with an unusual and husky hesitation—

“Ah wouldn’t cross Frank, lad, he’s a bad un to cross.”

Jack’s face crimsoned, but he made no attempt at reply. As the two men stood together, after gathering up crabs and bait and a damaged lobster-pot, the father laid his hard brown hand on the shoulder of his Benjamin, and without any hesitation this time said—

“She’s a bonnie lass, and a good, but there’s ithers as bonnie for thee, and Frank wadn’t iver tak to anither, if Ah knaws him. And t’ lass fancies him, an’ all, Ah reckon,” he added with some emphasis. Turning, he walked up the beach without looking at the other’s face, which had whitened through its tan.

Jack went through his day’s work with a sort of dogged care, taking out a couple of parties of summer visitors, a few of whom had

found out the little place, and cherished it as hid treasure. Now he had finished for the day, and had sought the loneliness of the "Laädy's Cove." The summer had been to him a dream of sweetness and delight. Everything in air, and sky, and sea, and in the homely cottage-life had grown beautiful. His knowledge of the life of birds and sea-creatures, of the ways of the winds and the tides, was joined to an imaginative faculty peculiar to these sons of the sea and the north, whose minds, vacant of books, are keen to note all that lies around them. And this knowledge had been a prized possession since that pretty Maid of Devon, staying with her uncle, old John Burr, had condescended to be amused, and then delighted with it.

When, on that first evening in late May, she sat in the shadowy depths of his mother's old kitchen, she had seemed to his fancy like a star in the night, and like a star had shone upon him ever since.

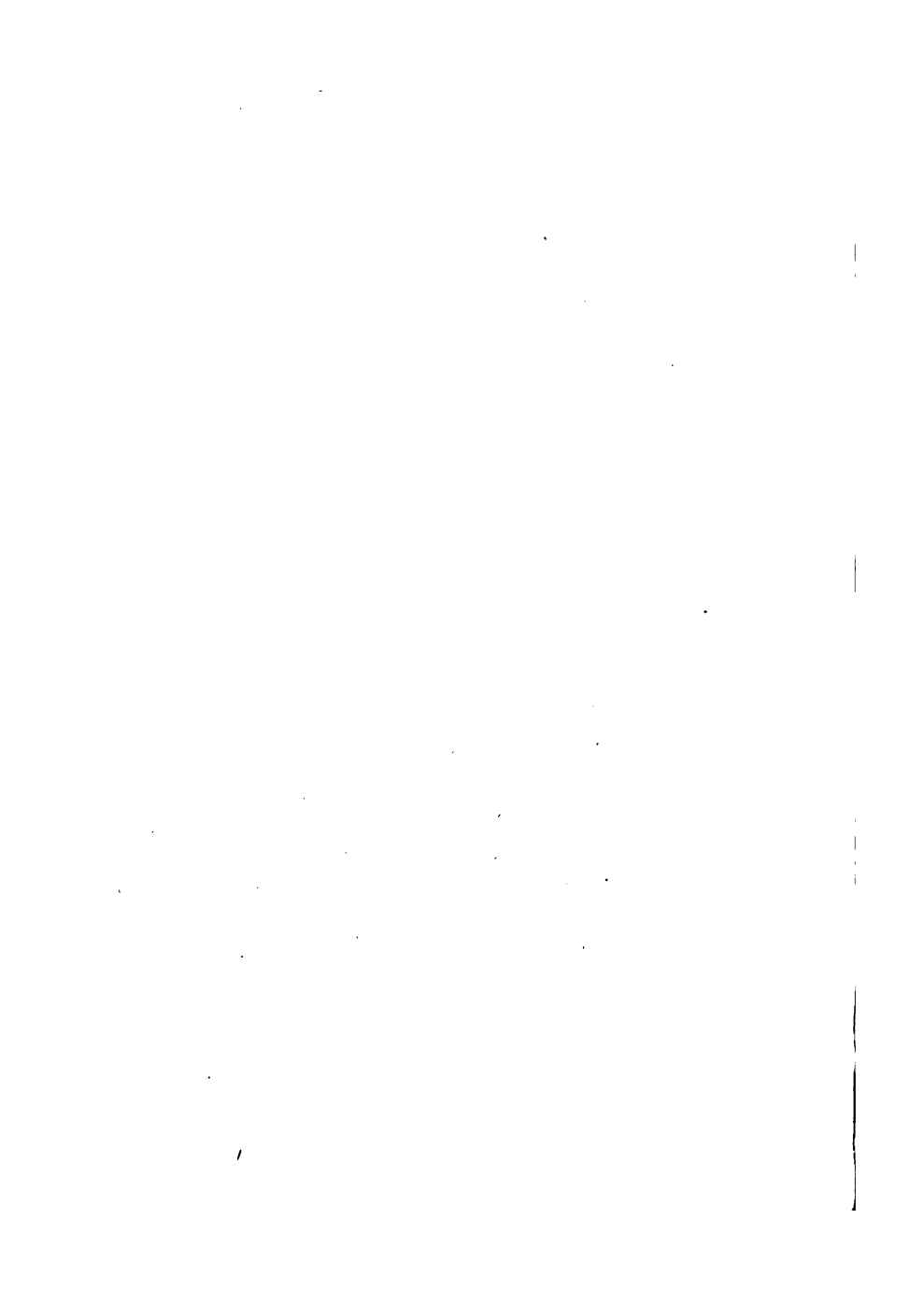
How much happier of late she had been with him than with Frank! And on that

Sunday evening, three weeks ago, when the three of them walked home from the old meeting-house, and the women at their doors had laughed at the elder brother for his new love of chapel-going, and one daring lass of a free tongue but a warm heart had shouted—"Gettin' tired o' t' sea for a wife, Frank? Y'ere but a man for all yer prood ways, and for all yer thinks o' yersel"—hadn't she crept near to him, to Jack, and held him closely in talk all the rest of the way?

Surely she—but other memories crowded up; memories with unflinching eyes that demanded truth; memories of evenings when he sat by her side in the white boat, and his brother rowed them round to the pools, and in and out of the coves; of moments when the blue eyes of the oarsman, resting upon the sweetness of the girl's face opposite, had told a tale that made Jack's heart uneasy in his breast; memories, too, of quick blushes upon gentle cheeks, and sudden droppings of eyes accustomed to a quiet outlook upon the world of men.



'Lad's love'



One scene lived again for him with painful distinctness. On that Sunday, three weeks ago, Frank had fetched "the little maid," as her Devonshire aunt loved to call her, from her uncle's. On entering their slip of a garden, he had plucked the fairest rose from the one rose-bush, and had given it to her, afterwards adding to it a bit of southern-wood with these words and a deep vibration in his voice—

"We call this 'lad's love' i' these pairts, will yer have it, Ruth?"

And she had taken it. And his father from behind a tremendous cloud of tobacco smoke had smiled at his wife, sitting large and comely on the sloping bench at the door, with her hands folded on her hymn-book.

The pain was almost too great to bear. Jack groaned.

The cormorant flew upwards with a harsh cry, and swooped down close to the man's head before settling in its old place.

"T' bird's sorry, I reckon, he knows I'm mazed, and i' trubble."

He was in truth "mazed." The close thought and the conflict bewildered his young brain. His very simplicity denied consolation. And now other memories surged over the last, recollections of his big brother's tenderness and care. He remembered how, on his sixth birthday he had received from him a marvellous toy yawl, perfect in all the larger details, made in secret places and stolen moments for the pet of the family; how, too, he had clambered out on the Spit, that long stretch of huge rocks to the left, to a favourite pool, clear as crystal, where he loved to watch the darting fishes and scuttling crabs when the tide was down, and see the shadows play with the sun on the limestone floor; here he had stayed for many fair voyages of the little boat, until the returning breakers roared beneath his feet, and the wind blew their spume into his face; he could feel again the clutch of that lonely terror upon his heart, and again, as the leaping wave sent a curving wash of foam into the pool preparatory to joining sea

with sea, the sudden snatch into love and safety: for Frank had discovered the child and caught him to his warm breast—yes, with a sob. And he would not part with him that night, but held him in his arms till he slept, and laid him in his own bed.

When he was a very little child his sister, a year or two older than himself, had died, and the sight of her sufferings, and the sound of her stifled breathing, had so wrought on his baby imagination that for weeks after her death he would sob in his sleep, and awake like a thing distraught, crying aloud for “poor Sissy.” His mother took him to the wise woman of Stathawick, the next fishing-hamlet. Not a *witch*, but a wise woman, the latter being a power for good the former a plague-spot of evil, both still believed in by the sea-folk to an extent which would amaze the ordinary town-bred Englishman.

The woman had taken him on her knee, and, lifting the right eyelid, and looking searchingly into his surprised blue eye, had given him a draught of herb tea, and, settling herself

in her capacious rocking-chair, had rocked him into a sleep of several hours. On giving him to his mother she had said—

“Bless the barn, he’ll do weel enough, but he’s over tender for this warld. There’s na use i’ frettin’, lass, Him ’at’s above knaws, and maybe He’ll tak’ him afore trubble comes. He willn’t tak him yet.”

And he *had* done well, had grown tall and large limbed, and strong with a strength that had been Frank’s pride. But his heart was “over tender” still, and trouble pressed him hard.

Never in the twenty years of his life had two weeks been so unhappy as these two last. Ruth had certainly been often with him, and had grown kinder as the days went by. Kinder, yet somehow different! Sadder, with a sigh more frequent than the smile. And Frank was no longer Frank. The quick step dragged, and the fearless eye, clear and keen as a sea-bird’s, was by turns gloomy and fierce. There was no loud whistle in the garden as he turned out before dawn to

“give a look to t’ booäts,” and he passed Jack without a look when they met on the shore, or gave an order with a stern brevity that cut the lad to the heart. He absolutely yearned for the hearty slap on the shoulder, and the indulgent smile of better days. To Ruth, too, Frank’s manner had changed: it was cold and indifferent, and once—how clear everything was becoming!—on finding her with Jack in the garden, he had turned back at the gate with a muttered word like a curse.

Yes, Frank loved Ruth, and Ruth loved Frank. Why hadn’t he understood? And Frank was jealous, how incredible that seemed! It was true, though.

“P’raps Ah’ve gived her too mony shells and stuff. Ah’ve takken her too oft i’ t’ booät, but Ah didn’t know, Frank lad, Ah didn’t know,” he spoke half aloud as if pain forced the words.

Just where the flushing sky and far off sea-line met, his eye caught the first sail of the returning fleet. It was his brother’s boat.

The air was still, the tide nearly full, and the water in the cove lay above the white beach like translucent emerald. Each slow wave rippled with delicate music against the cliff a few feet below him, and in the music lay a whispered moan. At this moment the bird stretched his long neck and lifted his wings as if to fly, but re-settled himself on the point, moving his head restlessly from side to side. Jack turned to see the cause of his disquiet. Coming over the short turf behind was "the little maid" herself. She swung her hat by its strings, and in the other hand, vividly splendid against her dark dress, she held a great bunch of scarlet poppies and grasses.

Jack's heart beat fast and his head swam. In the twinkling of an eye, out of his misery leapt a strange and delicious thought. A thought not of life but of death, of death together now. It would be a long rest in that familiar sea, and to die together was to rob death of every terror. Life possessed terror, not death. In a short moment this

and kindred thoughts rioted through his brain. But Love was stronger than self in this fisher-lad. Before the sound of her dress upon the grass reached his ears he had cast the impulse from him, as a man might fling off an adder. She loved Frank. He laid hold of this, as it were, with both hands.

She came towards him with a smile; her face was pale, and Jack saw with a pang that the red curves of her lips had changed, there was a little droop at the corners, and under the rings of dark hair on her forehead he could see two lines of pain, or of care, eloquent to his enlightened heart.

He took a step to meet her.

"Yer've got a bonnie posy theer, Ruth. Yer've come oot to see t' sunset, Ah'm thinkin'!"

The girl's eye brightened. She had often wished she had such a brother, so big and kind. There was little difference in their ages, but she thought of him as a mere boy.

"Yes," she answered wearily, "I thought

I would like to see it on the sea. I shan't be long here, maybe; and it's what you call 'bonnie,' isn't it? What a great bird, what's its name, Jack?"

"He's a corm'rant, he is. There's folks as saäy 'at yon corm'rants is t' sperrits of drooned fisher folk, but they'll say onything! They saäy t' birds niver sit i' yon waäy only when t' storm's comin', and they know when deeäth's i' t' wind."

"It's not that to-day, anyhow," she said. "How quiet it is, and what a sweet queer sound the water makes!"

"Ay," he returned, "but Ah doän't mak' mich o' that noise. Faäther disn't; he's tell't me mony a time 'at it comes for na good. If t' wind were sou' west, Ah doänt think he'd be for lettin' t' booät gan oot to-night. Theer's Frank's booät," he added, closely watching the face at his side. It quivered, and the brows contracted. Jack went on quickly—

"Will you tak a word fra me to Frank? I'se noän goin' hoäm to-night, I'se goin'

crabbin'." She hesitated, then with deepened colour replied—

"I'll give it to your mother, Jack."

"Nay, you s'all give it to Frank." He looked away over the sea. Pain gnawed at his heart, but Love was stronger than Pain. He hastened on.

"Doänt be vexed wi' me, Ruth, Ah can see 'at summat's gan wrang wi' you an' Frank."

She started and would have spoken, but Jack gave her no time.

"Ay, Ah can see, lass. Frank's a bit prood-like, but there niver was onybody like him." Ruth turned her face away.

"He doesn't like me," she said, "I don't know why, but it doesn't matter, don't let's talk about it, Jack." Her voice trembled. He touched her arm gently,

"Ruth!" At the solemn and tender tone she looked up at him. His face was grey and the eyes were the eyes of a man in which love and despair strove. Her gentle heart was moved.

"Jack," she cried, "you are ill, I'm sure you are." She took his brown hand in both of hers, and the sweet face, with its delicate southern colouring, was filled with pity and anxiety. An infinite gentleness was in Jack's voice.

"Nay, my lass, Ah'm noän ill. It's a bit hard to saäy what Ah've got to saäy, and doänt you be vexed wi' me. It's just this waäy, Ruth. Faäther sees it, an' Ah sees it. Frank thinks a deeäl on yer, ay that he does. He thinks all t' world on yer, an' he's got mistakken."

"Mistaken!" She looked amazed.

"Ay, he's got wrang notions. Folks dis when they think sa mich on a lass. An' he's a prood un." Ruth's eyes sought a stray horned poppy that had found a footing on the cliff's edge. The pallor deepened in Jack's face. He dropped her hands gently.

"Doänt you mind, Ruth. Faäther's niver mistakken, an' he knaws. He said soä. Ye're like t' sun i' t' sky to Frank." Two big tears fell upon the glaucous foliage of the poppy. They fell like fire on Jack's heart.

"It's goin' to come reeght," he added anxiously. A shy smile dimpled the down-cast face. The atmosphere of Jack's reverent love disarmed all resentment. Ruth felt there was much she did not understand, but she comprehended two things—life had brightened, and Jack was suffering. Her first thought was Frank, but her second was that Jack was ill. She lifted her face, warm with rosy colour, and her eyes looked bravely, trustingly into his.

"Dear Jack," she said, "how could I be vexed? You've been main good to me. Perhaps you know best." She gave a long sigh as of relief, then she pressed forward, impulsively laying her hand on his arm. She spoke urgently—

"Do go home, Jack; you don't know how you look! Don't go out crabbing to-day, you're terrible white."

"Nay, Ah'm noän goin' hoäm to-daäy. Will yer tak' t' message now, Ruth?"

"Yes," she answered in a low voice.

"Just tell him Ah want him to come doon to

t' booäts o' Saturday evenin'! An' tell him Ah've been thinkin' a deeäl o' that yawl he giv me when I wor a little un, an' o' yon daäy when he fetched me fra' th' Spit." Love was all one pain now. "How can Ah bide?" was the cry of his heart. He turned and walked hurriedly down the steep slope of the cliff-path, looking back once before he rounded the point of the cove. Ruth was watching him, perplexed and disquieted. With the sight of her photographed on his mind, he strode onwards. Something fluttered at his feet, it was a stone-chat with a wounded wing. His trained eye missed nothing. He lifted it from the ground, and kept it in the large hollow of his palm, stroking its head softly. In a dull, muffled voice he sighed, "Eh, poor thing, thee and me's i' t' saäme box, Ah reckon. Neäther on us'll fly ageän."

The herring-fleet went out pursued by that strange complaint of the retreating sea. The wind veered to the south-west with incredible rapidity. The whisper swelled to a cry, which blended before morning with the

shriek of a wild and tempestuous wind. The landsmen and the women, with such fishermen as remained, thronged the railed-in cliff-top, the old look-out of centuries, until the storm raged too violently for the women and the old.

"It'll be warse yet, Frank," said old Cammish to his son, as the wind forced him back against the flag-staff.

"I wish t' lad were saäfe back."

"Happen he'll be t' first hoäm," answered the other, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

It was but a feeble attempt. The evening before, Ruth's love, the beautiful and longed-for, had come into Frank's heart attended by joy, and guided by Jack's message. His spirit was humbled within him; all his affection for the boy, which the misunderstanding had checked, rushed back like a pent-up torrent. He understood what lay at the root of the message, and the strong man's one desire, strong as himself, was to see the lad and make him comprehend how deep was his love and gratitude. How this was to be done he never inquired. He gave no thought to

the reserve which tongue-tied the emotions of these descendants of the Northmen. The desire to see and to comfort seemed of itself eloquent enough to surmount everything. And behind all else was remorse.

The storm grew all day. At night no one in Lofthus was without dread of coming disaster. The air was white with flying foam, and the shore was strewn with wreckage. Towards morning the boats began to come in, each with its tale of loss of gear and of accident, but the *William and Mary*, Cammish's coble, was not amongst them. Slowly during the second day the rest of the battered vessels drove in, some with diminished crew, to be received with cries and tears by the women who had struggled to the beach. But the boat which Frank strained his eyes to see delayed still.

On the third night, between midnight and day-break, Frank lay in a deep slumber, a very grave of sleep. He was in the little crooked chamber under the eaves which he and Jack had occupied since the latter's child-

hood. The one moveable pane of the small window had blown open, and out of the black night came the sob of the dying storm. He stirred and muttered in his sleep, stirred again, and with difficulty opened his heavy eyes. Between the window and the bed there quivered a faint, uncertain light. He strove to quicken his torpid mind.

"Is it you, Jim?" he said. "Is she in yet?" Receiving no answer, and feeling a touch on his shoulder, he sat up and struggled into wakefulness. The light was steadier and brighter, and a figure stood close by the bedside.

"Jack," the awakened man cried; but the eager word died on his lips. Jack's head was bare, the damp curls clung to his forehead; on the right temple was a dark bruise. The water dropped from his "oil-skins," and glistened on his cheek. Did he speak? If his lips did not move, his eyes were eloquent. They dwelt upon the awe-stricken brother with an expression that said more to him than a thousand tongues. For a moment,

brief indeed, the two hearts knew a closer communion than ever before. The light faded. In its vanishing gleam Frank stretched out his arms to that dimming form, that young beloved face, but Jack was lost with the light.

When the *William and Mary* came in, the quiet sunset of the third day was crisping the fretted rocks with gold, and throwing a yellow tinge on the wide stretch of churned foam which lay like a blanket on the near side of the Spit.

“Down to t’ booäts” had come Jack’s old father and his sons. They had never questioned what seemed to them the obvious meaning of this strange appearing. Such things had happened before. What so likely and natural as that those who had been snatched from life without the chance of one farewell word to those they loved, should return for at least the farewell glance?

Such events had their atmosphere of awe, but they were not the less natural for that.

They rowed out to the coble’s side. There, with bared heads, they received the long

figure from their lad's sorrowing companions ; there they uncovered the beautiful face with the bruise on the temple, which the falling mast had made when it struck the life from him. And on his lips was the shadow of that smile which had spoken peace to Frank's remorseful heart.

THE WHITE CHRIST

IT was nine o'clock, and a fine mid-July morning in Norway. To say that, is to say that the earth had become a place of golden lights and shimmering colour, and far revealings of transfigured snow; and that the warm unsullied air was sweet with the quickening perfume of the juniper and birch and bog-myrtle, and all the flower pensioners of the sun.

It was the Norangs-dal. Two carriages went slowly down the rocky track, which no courtesy could call a road. A man walked by the side of each, holding the long reins, and exchanging an occasional word with the occupant.

Suddenly from the first carriage came a woman's voice, clear and peremptory. There was little to be seen of her beyond a wide

black hat, not too new, and a sturdy back disdaining the poor support behind it.

"Gertrude," cried the voice, "my guide wants to change. No special compliment to you, but something of a reflection on me! He says you speak Norsk, and he wants to learn more English. He thinks you will help each other. Send your man on."

Here Miss Deane turned herself in the narrow seat, and enforced her words with an energetic nod of her head. She was an elderly woman, with firm, even harsh features, but the years had drawn pleasant lines round the mouth, and the humourous eyes robbed the strong furrow between them of its sternness. There was some reply, but the light wind blowing down the valley carried away the words, whereupon she comfortably re-adjusted herself, shouting in a yet higher key—

"Don't talk, can't hear, only send him on. I won't be left with this animal, he is too original."

The girl behind laughed softly; to herself

she said, "Too original! now, I shouldn't have thought that possible. If like takes to like, Aunt Con ought to be happy." She spoke a few words of Norsk to her driver, a hale old man in the blue homespun of the peasant, who had just filled her hands with the vivid berries of the "blod-baer" and the delicate fronds of the oak fern, and who heard her directions with manifest regret.

"I do not wish to change," she added. "You have been very kind to me." The old man lifted his hat with a charming smile.

"Thank you, lady, but you shall like him very much. It is Thorgeir Ringvold of whom I spoke with you last night. He is a learned man, ja, ja, *meget flink* (very clever)." He brought his hand down with strong emphasis upon the horse's back. "His house is the Skyds-station, where the ladies will sleep to-night. He will find them a good boat, ja, ja, he knows about everything."


"Gertrude, Gertrude!" came down the wind, and the man hurried away.

Her eyes, fresh from the severe grandeur

of the Staven, whose mammoth bastion rose immediately behind them to the left, wandered with a lingering delight over the landscape, and climbed the heaped mountains at the further end of the "dal," rich in velvety purple and azure, upon whose flanks the rainbows played. They rested upon the high altar of the Slogan, which, cut as from a pale amethyst, lifted itself into the sky.

She sighed, "It is all too beautiful. I cannot take it in, and the desire to hold it becomes a pain. Here comes that man. If only Aunt Con would have kept him! I don't want to talk, and I don't want a driver who is very—anything. I want silence, and this beauty." Still she looked curiously at him, as, with a grave "good-day," he took the reins from her, and busied himself about the pony's head.

Her mind went back to what Hans Ringvold had told her of him—his cleverness as a farmer, his knowledge of languages, and his love of books. He had spoken of him with an amazed respect. And she remembered



that the old peasant had ended with, "He is of the blood of our kings, and I am glad a man of so good a life sits in the house of my fathers. We are now only peasants, but blood cannot change."

It seemed to her that the old kings, wheresoever they might be, and in whatsoever goodly company, could think no scorn of their descendant's physique. He was a very tall man, probably nearing forty, with immense shoulders, that from behind might be drawn with one horizontal line. His features, like those of many of his countrymen, were of an almost Grecian regularity, and his head rose with a free upstanding dignity that would have beseemed a prince. His homespun fitted itself to him with a kind of appropriate simplicity. Yet she was more struck by the expression of his eyes than by his bearing. Afterwards, in speaking of him to a friend, she said, "It was as if God had put His hands upon him, and said, 'Hush!'"

Her horse had stood still whilst the men were changing places. And now energetic

wavings of her aunt's hand made her new guide start at a quick pace. The carriage was good, but the sharp stones and rounded boulders over which it rattled shook her until her thoughts seemed to jostle and clash in her head.

"I don't know where any part of me is, aunt," she said, laughing breathlessly, as they overtook the foremost travellers. Miss Deane heard nothing, but Thorgeir Ringvold looked round at the loosened bronzed hair and flushed face, and smiled. And the effect of his smile was as when the sun rises on the snow. "I have come too quick, lady, and have discomfited you," his voice was musical and deep.

"Just a little," she answered gaily, amused by the word, and gathering up the falling plaits of hair, "you speak English, Herr Ringvold!"

"Yes," he said, "I speak much, but not well. Hans tells me you speak Norsk very good, and I will ask you to so kindly tell me of my wrong expressions—that is why I

changed," he added with simple directness.

The road turned. The young lady caught her breath.

"Oh aunt," she cried, "how lovely, look at that colour!"

Miss Deane, thus appealed to, without turning round, vehemently shook a switch of hazel that she carried in her right hand as a sign that she heard. Ringvold lifted his hat with an air of apology. His hair was reddish, and very thick, and stood like a waved crest above the full whiteness of his forehead.

"The old lady is perhaps tired, and she likes not to speak, but she also will find it beautiful." The girl's hazel eyes softened, she understood that he feared her enthusiasm might have been chilled by Miss Deane's lack of response. She took his words as a sign of a sensitive nature. Before them to the right, from the soaring cliffs which cut the blue like a knife's edge, swept a wide roseate flush of softly tremulous grasses. It was as if the past evening's sunset had dropped upon the

earth. Both were silent. The beauty held them mute. A wheatear alighted some yards off upon the shattered trunk of an old fir ; he let them come within two feet of him, and darted away with a long dipping flight. The white patch on his tail caught Gertrude's attention, and recalled her from her trance. She looked at the powerful figure striding at her side, and wondered where his thoughts were. Fixed upon an object seen only of the mental vision, of that she was sure, something remote and high. There was an aloofness about him, and a restrained strength which struck her afresh as she watched him. She felt growingly interested, and forgot her previous distaste for conversation. She began—

“You have quite a large library, Herr Ringvold, Hans tells me. I suppose you read a great deal ; what kind of books do you like best ?”

He started, and his eye kindled. He threw a quick keen glance at the charming young face, to which sun and air and her joy in them had given a richer beauty.

"Forgive me, lady," he said, "I was thinking of a day which is gone by. Hans is a good man, but he talks large. It must always be the great thing with him, much where it should be little, and high when it is but low. That is Hans," he laughed, showing all his white teeth. "We Norsemen are not often so, yet he is good, and it is true I have books. I have now nearly three hundred, and many are English."

"Really! no wonder you speak it so well; how did you learn it?"

"Many years ago," he answered, "I spent three months in Bergen, and a friend who knew English showed me a little of the language. And I read much in our so long winter. This last winter I have read for the first time Vordsvort."

"Wordsworth!" Gertrude's voice conveyed all her amazement.

"Yes?" he looked at her gravely and inquiringly, "you like him not in England? Ah, that is strange, he is all goodness and peace, and he knows nature from his heart,"

he included the landscape in a comprehensive wave of his hand.

The girl assured him that the great poet was loved and honoured in his own land, and that she was only astonished to find him read and appreciated by men of another country, and so far away. She could not say what was in her mind, "And by a peasant!"

"Why not?" rejoined her new guide, "he is for all the world like your Shakespeare, and your Milton, who sits on high—high as the top of the Slogan there. English, yes, by their earthly birth, but their words are for all the world. I would ask you now one thing, lady. The last English book I have read, there is about it what I cannot understand. It is clever, ja, it is very clever, many things in it I shall never forget, but it is—how do you call it, is it not just a little *old-fashioned*? It is 'Bacon's Essays'—who, then, is this Bacon?"

"'Bacon's Essays!'" ejaculated Gertrude in a great confusion of ideas. Bacon and a mountain peasant of Norway, Bacon and a carriage-

driver shut out from the world! Then her mind recalled his last words, "Who, then, is this Bacon?" How funny it all was! Peal after peal of sunny laughter awoke the echoing mirth of the mountain-trolls.

Ringvold's face was fast resuming its old look of remote stillness, touched slightly with hauteur, when she exclaimed—

"Please, Herr Ringvold, don't be annoyed with me. You will see why it amused me. Bacon is indeed one of our greatest, and filled a great position in our land, but—he died"—her voice threatened to fail in another laugh, "he died three hundred and fifty years ago, as nearly as I can remember."

His serious gaze melted. "Ah! then is it indeed old-fashioned," he said, adding, after a moment's reflection, "Lady, I am an ignorant man, it is a shame to me."

But the cloak of his reserve dropped somewhat. And as the miles passed, the girl scarcely knew which grew strongest in her, admiration or wonder.

Won by her interested attention, he told

her of his life, now very lonely but for his books, and for the company of his old Aunt Marit, his mother's sister. She heard of his collection of un-written legends and portions of Sagas, which he was making for Professor Grönvold of Christiania; of the long winters of study, and of the brief blessed summer, loved like a bride; and lastly of his years-old desire to visit England. He told her, too, that he believed his roving ancestors had transmitted their restlessness to him, for that now and again such a wild longing for travel possessed him, that it was only sheer force of will that kept him in his lonely valley. "But," he ended, "the good God has given me sight, and it grows stronger. For when I read of those far lands, and when my blood glows hot with the wish to see them, I do in truth see them. You think it strange?" his young companion was knitting her brows in a pretty perplexity. "Ja, it is perhaps strange. But it is true that, even as I read, it is before me like a picture, and I do not forget—it compenses—I think."

"Compensates," she corrected softly.

His simple diction, chosen, no doubt, as the easiest and most direct, and occasionally a mere translation from the Norsk, seemed to her beautiful. She would not have altered it for the world. And she had even begun to wish that in common speech in England we could throw aside conventional expression and speak English as a new tongue.

They had reached the top of the rising ground, and the road before them lay white and smooth. Ringvold had gathered huge bunches of purple scabious, and yellow snap-dragon, and had fastened them to the wash-board of the carriage, and above them, as from a bower, rose the head of the girl, lovely and glowing as that of Freyja herself. He had taken his seat behind her, and was driving swiftly down towards the Norangs Fjord, a branch of the Jörund.

"And do you think you will ever come to England?" she asked, half absorbed in the grandeur of the Slogan now immediately above them.

He hesitated, "I hope so,—I think it may be, now that the Christ has come."

The young lady's head turned sharply. "I beg your pardon," she said, "I could not quite hear you."

He slightly raised his voice, bending forward to her ear, "I said I hoped to come some day, now that the Christ has come." He spoke very distinctly. "Please sit yourself fast, we go quick down to Ringvold."

She grasped the side convulsively. What had he meant, what could he mean? In the lightning speed of that last rush down the level road her mind worked fast. Had she not heard of the effect of this mysterious and giant Nature upon the minds of the peasantry? That pleasant young barrister who had crossed with them, and who had worn the badge of the Norwegian Tourist Club, had he not described the effect of the loneliness at the feet of the awful mountains, and of the long darkness of winter upon minds already worked upon by a stern and rigid theology? It had saddened her then, but now that she saw be-

fore her a victim of these conditions in this man of intellect, with his sensitive feeling and magnificent physique, she felt overwhelmed by the sorrow of it. It was all clear to her; his brain, disturbed by study, had been warped, and this was his delusion!

As she reached this conclusion, they came in sight of the fjord itself, emerald-green, struck with arrow-shafts of sunlight from a rift in the mountain-wall. Her eyes filled; for the moment the splendour of the day was but a mood of a cruel and vengeful Nature.

At the side of the road a cleared space stretched before a timber house of great antiquity, to which lately a large guest-room had been added, the new light wood of which stood out with a glaring air of ephemeral and insubstantial inappropriateness against the massive logs, deep brown with age, of the ancient structure. In the porch, through which could be seen the old carven posts and lintel of the door rich with scroll work and writhing dragons, and the half effaced *runes* on the band of timber a couple of feet higher,

stood Miss Deane, short, stout and vigorous. In one hand she held a huge portfolio, and in the other a folding stool.

"It is the very place to sketch," she said as Gertrude sprang from the carriage. The girl had had time to recover herself, and had determined to say nothing of her discovery to her aunt, whose discretion was not to be relied upon. In the interval between their arrival and the mid-day meal, she occupied Miss Deane and herself with an examination of the spacious receiving room. It seemed to be to the family what an Irish friend of hers called a "glory room," to be used on high days and notable occasions, and stored with useless treasures and stiff furniture.

Its only beauty was its view, and the luxuriant festoons of ivy, which, starting from the grove of window plants, had been trained round three of its walls. But the marriage chests on each side of the new porcelain stove were curiously and fantastically painted, and in an old black cabinet with glass

doors, near the window, all the bridal ornaments and silver drinking cups of the dead Ringvolds were displayed, and, in the middle, upon a faded cushion, lay the silver bride's crown itself.

When the more solid part of the meal was finished, and Aunt Marit had brought in the dish of heaped wood-strawberries and the jug of cream, Miss Deane began discussing her plans for the afternoon.

She was a fair water-colourist, and though perpetually brought to despair by the elusive beauty of the scenery, as perpetually struggled again to capture it, being a woman of spirit and purpose.

"You look jaded, child," she said suddenly, "jaded and worried. Now, why should you?"

"The road was so shockingly bad, aunt, it shook me all to pieces."

"That, my dear, is a convincing proof that you are too thin," said the older lady decisively, "but years will cure that, and some day you will rejoice in a comfortable padding

like mine. But while I sketch you shall rest. I won't have my lady-bird knocked up." The resolute voice softened; she pushed away her plate, and as she rose she patted her niece's cheek with affectionate briskness. And it was arranged that Miss Deane should settle herself in the porch, where she could look down the fjord, and that Gertrude should row lazily about near the shore. The latter asked Hans, who was sitting smoking upon a log in front of the house, to launch for her the little boat that lay on the shingle not fifty yards away. He got up with a pleasant readiness.

"Ja, ja," he exclaimed, "it is a good day for a boat, and no doubt the lady can row herself. Did she then find Thorgeir amusing?"

Gertrude reddened. "He is clever and kind," she said, "but has he not studied and read too much?"

Hans turned eagerly to her, "You are right, lady. Have I not myself said it to him? For what is the use of reading all night, and buying all the books in the world, if one is

to grow pale as the snow, and let the good money go in paper? And now he shall buy more, now that the Christ has come!"

The girl at his side trembled. Were they all then monomaniacs? Even this happy creature who carried his age so lightly!

She mentally noted the apple-red cheek and the blue eye, clear as a boy's, with its glance at once lenient and shrewd. These were no signs of a distracted brain. She stepped hastily into the boat, and Hans pushed her strongly off.

"Farvel, Farvel," he cried, "a happy journey!"

He remained standing, watching her until she rounded the jutting headland where the farm buildings stood.

"She is like a rose from the wood of Kviteggen," he said, and he walked away.

That night Miss Deane fell ill. It was nothing serious; an attack of that strange "three-days' throat-sickness," the bane of many a Norwegian traveller. There are fever and shivering and sore throat for three days, and

on the fourth the sufferer is well, but for a little weakness.

Gertrude was constantly with her aunt. She had long ago seen the sterling qualities below the brusqueness and peremptoriness, and in all her ways with Miss Deane she responded to them, brushing away, as it were, the mere appearance of things.

But there were intervals in her work as nurse when she ran out for a draught of the loveliness outside, or down into the living-room to Aunt Marit the picturesque, who, as a Hardanger woman, clung to her white-spreading coif and embroidered bodice of scarlet. Everywhere the girl was welcome. The grave host himself made her free of his small book-room, where she found cause for astonishment in the books, their value, and their subjects. When he talked with her there came upon his face a gleam which reminded her of that first sight of the fjord, the still waters broken by the shafts of light.

She had tried to ask his aunt delicately a question concerning his delusion, but her

courage failed her. There was so calm a judgment in all he said and did, that she began to be reconciled to this lesion of the mind, and to count it a slight thing. And of Hans she thought not at all.

When she sat with Aunt Marit in the "daglig-stue," the living room, with its ancient open fire-place and smoke aperture in the roof, where the loom and the spinning wheels were, the warmth of the life of centuries enfolded her, and she let her perplexity drift away, and fastened her attention upon the talk of the old woman. There were stories in connection with everything. The chair in the corner, cut out of a solid log from the forest primaeval, had been the seat of judgment of a viking ancestor. The two carved and recessed beds were crudely painted and decorated to please some Telemarken ancestress, and the great silver-bound tankards had been drained by generations of warriors, now lifting the mead-cup high in Valhalla. The Norse-woman's mind was stored with legends, and the blood of her listener ran

chill in her veins, as, shaking her impressive forefinger, she recited the story of the Black Giant of the Lillehorn, or of the white sorceress of the Krone-brae, and realistically described the horrors of the Sorte Död.¹

To the end of the girl's life cloud-berries would have for her an interest beyond their flavour and their blossom. It was while she pounded them in a great wooden bowl that Aunt Marit told her the tale of the miraculous crucifix that, found by a couple of ignorant fishermen in the sea, refused every resting-place but the green meadows of Rödäl, where it allowed a church to be built over it. "And the Christ upon it has a feeling heart, Fröken," concluded Aunt Marit, "for they say, and I heard it from an honest man, that when the harvest fails, or the sickness is much in the valley, tears of pity fall down His cheeks. And this man's nephew was cured by Him of the rheumatism."

"Aunt Con is almost well," said Gertrude,

¹ Sorte Död—the Black Death.

as she stood with Thorgeir Ringvold in the porch on the evening of the third day. "She has decided to leave to-morrow afternoon."

The man looked down at her from his great height. She would pass from his life as the summer passes, this young English lady of the sunny presence.

"I am glad, yet I am sorry," he answered with sadness.

"We, too, are very sorry," she said gently. "You are all so kind. But *you* are good to everyone, Herr Ringvold. Were you ever unkind for one little moment?" She laughed up in his face. There was an immediate change in his expression. He was rigidly silent, and the pensive regret of his eyes changed to a startling misery. Gertrude gazed at him, astounded.

He laid his hand on her shoulder heavily.

"Lady," he faltered, and she felt his hand quiver. "Kind and good are no words to say of me. Nor must you think them of me. I have been a cruel man."

Without another word he turned and left her.

"It is all a mistake, I know," she said, lifting her face to the golden sky, "part of that same wretched unhinging of his mind. I cannot bear to think of it." She walked dejectedly into the house.

The next morning she was out on the fjord. All the packing and preparation for the journey were completed, and Miss Deane was resting. Gertrude leaned upon her oars. Out of the dancing sparkle of the middle of the fjord she had passed into a green so intense, and so shot with blue and violet as to resemble nothing but the sheen and hue of a peacock's breast. To the left the fjord stretched, on either side there was an occasional farmstead, around which the patch of cultivation gleamed against the pine-woods like an emerald. The colour everywhere soothed her. Her mind was still shadowed by the event of the past evening. She knew something of the Norwegian peasantry, and to her, as to many other travellers, they had been

at once a marvel and a rebuke. There is no better man than the best of them, none with a clearer eye to recognise good, nor with a steadier resolution to avoid evil, none with a higher ideal of honour and truth. But a few incomprehensible words had filled the imaginative girl with an overwhelming pity for them. The very conditions which have produced their unusual strength and purity of character were in her present mood pitiful in the extreme.

Before her, across a strip of shining water, outlined by the sea-weed's tawny fringe, lay the churchyard, around its little decaying church old as the family of Ringvold. Behind it the sun-kissed mists clung to the breast of the Slogan, and the voice of its torrents murmured hoarsely in her ear.

"Dear Norway!" she exclaimed, "this is the third time of coming to you, and you have never made me so unhappy before, nor have you ever been so beautiful!" Her eyes fell again upon the old church. She resolved to visit the resting-place of this people of the

shadow and the grave, all of whom perhaps had lived this strange life of mingled phantasy and fact.

She tied her boat to a rocky projection, and climbed the steep path to the little gate. The irregular graves for the most part were deep in grass and flowers. Harebells of a giant size and masses of yellow snap-dragon waved over the low mounds, and ox-eye daisies nodded above an undergrowth of wild pansies which carpeted the yet undug ground. The whole God's-acre lay warm in sunshine, which found red lights in the old timber of the church. She filled her hands with pansies, and sat down to think.

The soaring presence of the mountains emphasized in her mind the agitating question. It was as if the pale dead rose about her in the resplendent light, holding out pathetic hands, telling her of their struggle with the circumstances of their life. She looked at the weather-beaten church. "And did they give you no help there?" she whispered, "did they let you think that He had come

already to this world, this unready, imperfect world? And were you satisfied, I wonder?" She wandered through the scattered crosses, leaning at all angles, to a group of three or four trees, birch and hazel, which hid the further end of the churchyard from her. Here she remained a moment looking back at the water, then walked slowly round the trees.

The flowers fell to the ground, the young wistful eyes grew large and wild as if with terror. Her breath came like a sob, and she pressed her hand against her breast. Tall against the dark trees shone a white figure with hands outstretched. The folds of its garments swept the grass, and the hands were wide in loving invitation. Then her eyes overflowed, and she smiled.

"How foolish of me!" she said, "but it was so unexpected and so life-like." It was a copy in marble of Thorwaldsen's Christ. "Whose grave is this, I wonder," she pondered, bending down over a small stone slab let into the earth, carefully cleared of moss and grass. Upon it was written—



"The White Christ."

Ingwald Ringvold,
Brother of Thorgeir Ringvold,
Aged 24.

"Kommer til Mig."

"His brother. Oh," she exclaimed joyfully, "I begin to see. This is the Christ of whom they spoke. It is a great event in the valley, and of course they thought I had heard. Yes, I understand, I am so unutterably thankful. He is not mad, in spite of those strange words last night. That was probably humility; these natures are so much deeper than ours, miserable facile creatures that we are. So this is the Christ; how beautiful!"

"Yes, lady, this is the Christ. He came a month ago, and see how the flowers have grown about His feet." Thorgeir Ringvold had come up unheard on the long grass.

Pale, and with his usual quiet deepened into peace, he bore so strong a resemblance to the marble features that Gertrude was struck by it. The same straight brows and fulness of the forehead, the same fine sweet mouth and close beard, but, instead of the

grave tenderness of the marble, a chastened melancholy.

"How young he was to die," said the girl. "You loved him very much, I know."

He did not respond directly. "You see that He stands where all may see who come round the rocks there."

It was true. Hidden from the rest of the fjord by the trees, the white figure could be seen of all who sailed in the bight beyond, where the low rocks spread beneath the water. "He will save some in the autumn storms, and Ingwald shall be glad in heaven," he continued, stooping to pick a dead branch from the grave.

Gertrude scarcely knew how to talk with him, fearing that the unusual slowness of his manner meant unwillingness to speak of his loss. She looked at her watch. There were still two hours to "middags." She decided to take a walk towards the foot of the Slogan, and had reached the path leading through the churchyard when his voice recalled her.

"Lady," he said, "have you then a little

time in which I could speak with you? I would not let you go without telling you of my sin. You must not think too well of me." He spoke with the utmost simplicity. She felt instinctively that to refuse would be to hurt him. It was not a time for many words.

"I will sit here, Herr Ringvold," she said quietly, taking her seat upon a small mound near the path.

He remained standing opposite her, his brother's grave between them, his clasped hands hung down before him; and his eyes sought hers with a steady sorrow.

"Ingwald would be grieved for me to-day," he began, "but I owe it to him to tell you, for I sinned against him and against God." He barely whispered the divine name. "He was my only brother. My mother died when he came, and when I was twenty my father died, and he left to me Ingwald, and Aunt Marit has been with us since that day. Then was he only twelve, a merry boy, loving too, and so good to see. As he grew

older, often I said to myself, 'So the hero Frithiof looked.' For he was big even as I am big, and his skin was white as a maiden's, and his eyes were like the sky over the Saksa there. When he was sixteen years he was strong as a man. He knew not fear, not on the fjord in the storms, nor when the bear turned on him in the woods behind, and he laughed and sang more than I liked, lady. I was alway serious, and my father, he was a Haugian,¹ very grave and pious, and he said always that this was not a world to laugh in, there was too much sin. It was when Ingwald was eighteen years that I grew angered with him. He liked not work, but went everywhere to sing and play. He played the fiddle at every bryllup—wedding you call it, and made the saeter-life also like a wedding, they said, with his laugh and his music. Then it was that he began to drink aqua-vit and other spirits, and I was always impatient with him. I see it to-day.

"When he was nineteen years he thought

¹A follower of Hauge, the Wesley of Norway.

he loved. I think now that it was true. For some months he was different, he worked as a man should, and gave me time for my books, my books that were filling all my heart. He went to church with Astrid Olsen, the daughter of the farmer over there," he pointed to a group of red-roofed buildings across the bay, "and I thought all would be well.

"But Astrid was young and gay, and liked also the dance and the song, and his new ways fell from him. Sometimes he came home drunk. That was dreadful to me, it hurt my pride more than my love. Scorn is devilish, and scorn grew fast in me, and when Astrid's mother came with complaint of him, I grew hot like a fire. We quarrelled that night, yet I think he would have repented, but I left him as if he had been some crawling thing. I believe that even then he forgot, but I—never. And now he did no work, but would lie on his bed with his fiddle, imitating the birds of the air and the creatures of the farm; and to go

near to him was to smell cognac or aqua-vit. One day we were cutting our first hay, and Olsen came over the field to me, and said never should an idle drunkard like Ingwald marry his daughter. He was angry, but I waited not. It was the drink of bitterness to my soul that he should refuse the blood of the Kings, and I left him where he stood.

“In the porch I saw my brother. I remembered the rage of the Berserkers and I thought it was upon him. With a strange sound in his throat, he shook his fists above his head, and his eyes were as the blue fire of the lightning when there is danger in the storm. He cursed Peter Olsen and his wife, and he cursed himself. He was always big, but now he swelled to my eyes in his wrath, and for a moment I feared him. As I came near he laughed; it was no laugh for a man, but rather for an evil spirit, for a devil. It angered me. I said to him, ‘Curse your own foolishness and sin that has lost Astrid.’

“‘Never speak her name again, never in this world,’ he cried to me, and his eyes

blazed like a bear's when it is hard driven. At that moment I had pity for him, for there was one I loved, lady; Death himself took her from me. That was bad, but if she had lived and I yet had lost her! Ah, ja, I pitied him. And when his rage passed and he fell like a stone on the seat, I came near loving him again. Yet I spoke not, my wicked shame was my obstacle, and I left him, left him lying like a tired child there in the porch."

The girl shivered, and the sadness in Ringvold's eyes deepened. He went on in a lower voice—

"If I loved him at all, I loved him too little. And my pride was always great. After that he cared nothing to do right any more. It was always the drinking, and I refused to give him money, for it went only to buy spirits. About this we had ill words, and afterwards we spoke little with each other. There were times when he waited for my kindness, and I held it back. Then my uncle in Hardanger died, and Aunt Marit went to help the widow. If she had stayed it might have been different,

for her heart is the great heart of a mother, though she has never had a child." The speaker sat down at the foot of the grave; it struck Gertrude that the mere touch of it was dear to him, and gave him courage to proceed.

"The summer, lady, had nearly gone," he said, "and the barley was cut. I came home one day to 'middags'; I was early, and I went into my room for a book. I had then two large volumes of Sagas which Professor Grönvold gave to me. They were beautiful, in what you call 'vellum' and gold, and they were dear as my child might have been. They were gone, they, and four or five others. I did not believe the sight of my eyes. I felt with my hands in the hole where the Sagas had been, and in it was a piece of paper, torn and dirty, and on it the writing of my brother. He said, 'You give me no money, so I take your books, also my father's watch, and the silver cup with the runes. The money in your chest I think mine also, and I have taken it.' It was true, the lock

of my chest was broken, and the money gone. That was nothing to me. But my treasures, and the treasures of my fathers!

“My legs were weak beneath me, and I could not hold my thoughts. I sat until my strength came back to me, and I hated Ingwald. It is true, I hated him, and I said to myself that I had right. Was he not a thief? For some days I went no more in my book-room, the empty places stung me like a snake, but every day the rage leapt stronger within me. I heard, too, a shameful story of my neighbour Husby's son. He had betrayed a saeter-girl to her ruin, and they said it was Ingwald's fault. They said that his words and his example had drawn many lads of our fjord into ways of sin, and I believed them.

“The day the first frost fell I went down to the boats. I wished to bring the last fodder from the saeter. There was a man on the shore, and he fastened the boat, your boat, to the large one. It was Ingwald.

“We were not far from each other. In my ears was the sound as of a fos, and in my eyes

a red fog. It would have been well if I had blinded or lamed him, if by that my passion might have fled, and afterwards we had been brothers again. But I touched him not, yet—did I put out the eyes of his soul !”

Gertrude breathed hard. She was a girl of fine and well-tempered nerve, but the intensity of the man shook her. His very restraint deepened its hold upon her. Only her conviction that this unburdening was a relief to him made it possible for her to listen with any appearance of quietness. She sat amongst the harebells, looking at him with serious eyes of sympathy, holding in her emotions with a firm hand.

The day was gloriously bright, and the wet hide of a porpoise rolling near the shore caught the light like polished metal. Ringvold had waited as if to recover himself; he now took up his tale again.

“If you had seen him then you would have had pity. He was worn and thin, and there was a hunger for something in his looks. Afterwards I heard that he had been to Olsen’s

to see Astrid once more, but she had turned him with laughter from the door. I had no pity. I spoke, and it was not my voice, the spirit of my hate had changed it. I said to him that he was liar, and drunkard, and thief, that he was no Ringvold any more, only a villain without a name. I repeated to him the story of the saeter-girl and the young lad, his friend. I said he was like the devil, a destroyer of men's souls. 'And there is no forgiveness for such,' I said, 'never in my heart, and never in the heart of Jesus Christ. Nay, I know that God Himself turns from you, and will forgive you—*never!*' Lady, what was the blackness of his sin compared to mine?

"He did not cry, or speak at all. Ingwald had strength also. He held himself straight and very stiff, and the blue of his eyes went dark. Then his head bent a little forward, and he passed me, very still, making no noise with his shoes upon the road. He turned no more, and when the road twisted he looked not back. And I—I was glad.

“The months passed, and I was still hot in my soul. My loss grew upon me,—only in my dreams I had rest, for he was always there, a little boy. Yet, I liked not the nights because of the awaking.

“Three years passed, and I settled myself in sullenness of spirit. In January of the fourth year an Englishman, who had been shooting ptarmigan, came this way and engaged me to go on with him to Förde, and drive him down to Vadheim on the Sogne Fjord. He would see my country in its snow. I was tired of all things, even of my books that winter, and I went. He was a good man, his eyes were like yours, lady, and he had the same-way feeling heart, and though I said little to him, he knew that there was something wrong on my soul. He talked to me sometimes, and when I reached Vadheim I was, perhaps, a better man. I left my horses and sleigh there, and went on with him to Bergen, and there I stayed a week. I was standing in Torvet, the *market* as you would say, and I remember that a long icicle hung from the

nose of the statue of Christie, and it amused me. From the street opposite came a man, coughing horribly, ja, and he was in rags. We have not many beggars in Norway—though I hear that in England, where you have much money, you have also many beggars and many rags—and it was because of his torn coat that I did look at him. He crossed Torvet and passed me—he was my brother. His eyes and mine met, and they knew! The first minute I would have spoken, the second, no. The cup with the runes and my books, they hung between my face and his. *He* never stopped at all, but I had seen that the light air had gone from him, and in his eyes was patience. The rest of the day was full of misery; I could neither stand nor go. And in the morning I left Bergen. I reached Vadheim, and began at once my journey home. There were voices in my heart that spoke for Ingwald, so ill, so poor, but louder than the voices was my anger.

“I came late one evening to the bridge across the Jölster Elv. I was tired, and my heart

was tired in the strife between the voices and myself. Now, instead of crossing the bridge, the horses stood still; more than that, they refused to move. To animals I had never been a cruel man, but now I beat them with all my strength, and I am strong. Yet would they not go a step. I stopped to breathe, and I saw a man, a small dark man, leaning against the bridge. He stood very black against the snow. The stars were bright, and in their light his face was cold and stern. He spoke to me.

“‘Why will not the horses cross?’ he said. ‘Horses ordinarily go over without difficulty. Only once have I seen them refuse.’ ‘And that once?’ I said. I was angry with the horses and with the man. ‘The man was a thief, he had stolen wares with him,’ he answered. ‘Well,’ said I, in a fury, ‘I am no thief, and over they shall go, if I drag them with my hands.’ I seized their heads and pulled with my might. But now they went backwards, pushing the sleigh hard against the wall, and they took me with them.

The man laughed ; it was a strange laugh, and I felt cold.

“ ‘ Wait,’ he said, ‘ do you know the story of this bridge ? I think not, and I will tell it you. There is a legend that if a man flies from justice or goes on an evil errand, the spirit of the river will not let him pass. If he has horses they will not go over, for they fear the Lord of the river.’

“ ‘ Away, why, this is child’s talk,’ I said, and I lifted my whip again. Lady, the world is not ours, it is God’s, and He has many ways. As I would beat again my horses, I saw on one side of the bridge Ingwald as a child, his smile was joyful, and his bright hair was blown backward as with a wind, and his hands were stretched out to me. On the other side was Ingwald the man, ill and ragged, and he too held out to me his so thin hands. And between them was something high like the white water of a fos. And in the whiteness were two eyes that moved not from mine. There was a hand that pointed from the child Ingwald to the man Ingwald,

and the eyes said, 'Go back.' And I turned my horses, and so wonderful is God, I went. As I journeyed, the gates of my soul were unlocked, and I saw within. When I reached Bergen I was a humbler man, and I had only one desire—to find my brother.

"It was not easy, not even in Bergen, which is as a small village, they tell me, compared with your great cities. I looked for him three days and then I found him. There were other lodgers in the poor house, but he was in a room alone at that moment. When I went in he stretched out those thin hands to me, and I thought on the Ingwald of the bridge. There was a voice that said 'Forgive!' but whether it was his or mine I know not, it was the longing of our two hearts. And all that was between us was swept away as by a flood in spring. He was dying. After that meeting in Torvet he had laid himself in his bed, and had gone out no more. I carried him into a room where the sun shone, and he lingered with me yet a week or two. When he slept I meditated upon him, and

when he woke I read to him or I talked. He could speak but few words at one time. He was another Ingwald, his face had the look of my father's, and he had become a *man*. Weak as a child and easy for me to carry, there was in him a new strength of mind and will. And sometimes when he slept I had a hard fight with my rebellion against God. I would have given all that I had if he might have stayed.

From himself, when he might speak, and from the man and woman of the house who loved him, I heard that he had at first got much money with his fiddle and his songs, and he spent it all in evil and careless ways. And the blame of it is mine. For when I, his brother, and a man of good life, who to him seemed more clever than the most of men, found no forgiveness for him, not in my own heart, no, and not in the heart of God Himself, what other road was there for him to take? Astrid loved him no more. There was neither love nor pity in heaven or on earth. He drank to forget, and when memory awoke hot within him, he drank yet deeper.

Then his voice failed, and his money went with his voice. It was now that he wandered by the shore of the Lungegaard's water, and thought to end all. But the teaching of my father when he stood a little child at his knee came to his mind, and he feared. There was the other side of death. Then the cough came, and he was often hungry.

"The man and woman told me of many deeds of his kindness when he yet had money. In a world which held no love for him, he had had pity on others. As I thought on this, and on his boyhood, I learnt that pious people make great mistake when they will have all men of the same mind.

"See," Ringvold pointed to an out-building over the wall, the roof of which was a mass of varied bloom, all the flowers of the meadow having found a footing. "Is it not so? The same sun, the same earth, the same small roof, but a hundred different flowers. If I had learned it earlier he would not have been *there* now.

"Two days before his death he asked me if

I remembered those words of mine. If I remembered! And he looked away from me that he might not see my shame.

“‘Thorgeir, you were wrong,’ he said, and his face was mild and kind. ‘First God forgave me, and now you have forgiven, and both with a heart of love.’ He would not let me speak, ‘for I have little time,’ he said, ‘and I would tell you something.’ I bent my head to him, his voice was very weak, and he told me *this*:—In the past autumn his clothes had grown so thin that the air pierced him, and he went one Sunday through the open door of St Peter’s Kirke for warmth. One day it is the far country, and another it is the Father’s house. I think that though outwardly he yet lived his careless life, his soul was seeking its rest, and he found it. For in St Peter’s Kirke there stands a repetition of Thorwaldsen’s Christ, even as He is here.

“The sun shone on Him that day, and His appearance was as one come newly from heaven’s glory. Peace was everywhere; no

man within the church. Suddenly Ingwald knew in himself that the great hour of his life had come. He was alone with Christ. He said that; he said, too, that he saw the golden letters below His feet,

Kommer til mig.

And, lady, he went. Ja, ja, soul and mind and body. He knew not that he walked, but later he found himself lying there beneath the face of Christ, and he was at peace. He had been lifted to that heart of God of which I lied! How it came I know not. I ask not of it. I hope always that Thorwaldsen knows.

“Two days after this I was standing at the window watching the people as they went down to the Strandegade. The sun was warm on my face, and my mind saw Ringvold in the spring. From his bed my brother called ‘Thorgeir!’ I turned to him. He sat up straight and strong. In his eye was authority, and in his voice a command.

“‘Thorgeir!’ he said again, ‘the Christ!’ He pointed to the foot of the bed, and bowed his head with reverence. So might my fathers

have looked on the day of battle in the presence of the king. And in the same hour he died.

“That evening I looked in the box where his few clothes were. At the bottom was a parcel wrapped in a coat of vadmál. I opened it, and something fell from it, shining, and rang along the floor. It was the cup of runes! And within the folds were my father’s watch and my books,—all of them. He had not spoken of them, perhaps he could not; and I had had one wish, that he might forget.

“It was the bitterest hour of life to me. If I could have called him back I would have knelt before him for forgiveness. Not one was gone, though he had hungered for food.” The speaker’s voice had grown hoarse.

“I brought him home, and on the way I swore that the money that should have been his meat and drink, the money which should have kept him in life, should bring the Christ to stand beside his grave. Our prest, a good man, says that there were better ways

for sorrow and remorse to take. He is good, it may be, but I saw no other for me, and a man must do as his eyes see.

“We laid him here, and one day I shall lie here also—but at his feet. And the Christ’s shadow shall fall upon us both.”

He stood up, taking a deep breath, and Gertrude rose from her seat among the flowers. She felt that there was little for her to say. Nay, he had said all himself, and he was comforted—not of man, but of God.

“Herr Ringvold,” she said, and her face was more eloquent than her words, “I thank you more than I can say for telling me of your great sorrow. I shall always feel very proud that you cared to tell me. And may I think of you as happy now?” She put out her hand. Thorgeir took it with a sigh and a smile.

“Happy?” he said, “happy is a great word. You shall think of me as at peace, and as thankful that you have heard me, and are still kind. And one day I shall be happy.” He looked up at the field of blue,

pierced by the Slogan's altar, "but not, I think, until I see him."

Two hours later, as the three stalwart rowers took them swiftly down the Norangs branch of the fjord, Miss Deane touched Gertrude on the arm, "Look at Herr Ringvold," she said, "what a man!"

He was standing on the shore, tall and motionless, gazing after the receding boat, and the afternoon light fell upon his face. "He is one with his own mountains," she continued, "in their calm as well as in their strength." And the girl answered softly, "Yes, *peace*, too, is a great word."

MISS PENELOPE'S TALE

WE had come in, my brother George and I, from a short driving-tour, intending to take the next train back to London, and to *work*. But the beauty of the centuries-old inn and its surroundings had tempted us to delay our homeward journey until the morning, and, leaving my brother to finish the arrears of his correspondence, I wandered into the large and lovely garden.

A pied wagtail had allured me by the most unmistakeable invitation conveyed in the flirt of his tail and the glint of his eye. And now, after running by my side down the long box-bordered path, and giving me such confidences as I could comprehend, he had flown away, first bestowing on me the freedom of the garden.

What a garden it was! All the old-



The Old Garden

fashioned flowers of my love were there, and the lawn was sentinelled by great clipped yews, sprouting here and there in defiance of the forms imposed on them. The peacock near me had developed a tuft in the middle of his back, and the castellated tower beyond waved a red-berried branch from the battlements. All the length of the lawn stretched the grey, time-fretted walls of the inn, rose-hung and ivy-bound, broken by many a quaint oriel and jutting bay. A low arch, with a defaced image above it, led into the house from the garden.

At the end of the path, full in the September sunshine, grew a stately columbine, so equal in its perfection, that it brought to my mind immediately those sister-plants which the old Italian masters, having lavished the riches of their knowledge and their adoration upon the Madonna herself, loved to set at her feet.

I was kneeling on the ground, lifting upon my palm one of the broad sculptured leaves, crimsoning for the autumn, when a swift step came behind me down the path.

"So those odious letters are finished at last," I said, without looking up, "and, George, here is your reward, the very identical columbine out of Titian's Golden Madonna!"

There was no answer. I turned my head. The new-comer had stopped as I spoke, but he was a much younger person than George, and a complete stranger. I sprang up, a good deal confused, but, taking courage from my mature years, and emboldened by the pleasant smile upon the stranger's face, I strove to cover the little embarrassment by an apology, and an invitation to him to consider the beauty of the garden. With the air of one quickly at his ease, he said—

"It is charming; but the house! Isn't it positively one's ideal of an ancient mansion?" As his eye travelled over the grey walls, I looked well at him. He might be twenty-seven or twenty-eight; he was spare and muscular, and had a striking and unusual face. I suppose he was handsome, but the adjective which fitted my impression of him was

“distinguished.” The brows were wide and finely-formed, and projected over the eyes; the nose was aquiline, the complexion dark and clear, and over a mouth, which I instinctively felt was sensitive and refined, drooped a thick black moustache. I had, I remember, a little shock of surprise when he turned his eyes full upon me. They should have been black, or dark brown, but they were vividly, transparently blue.

He finished his inspection by saying—

“I believe it once belonged to the Austin friars, and there was a chantry connected with it in the wood there, but I could not find a vestige of it in my walks to-day. By the bye, have you seen the landlord?” He laughed, it was a delightful laugh, low yet mirthful, and being somewhat of a connoisseur in laughs, I set him several degrees higher in my estimation! “Have you seen him?” he repeated. “The queerest customer!” To which I replied that I had only seen a fat waiter. “Then you have an experience before you. He is an American, and has

taken this inn with the view of making a good thing out of it. He told me he thought 'the old shell would be a capital spec,' and that he had drawn up a history of it, and touched it up with a ghost or two, and a tragedy, 'about as blood-curdling as they make 'em.' To see him standing under that ancient portico, tapping his teeth with his pencil, and mentally counting his pile, struck me as the funniest anachronism I had ever met with. And the worst of it is, that I can't hate the old Pagan, he is a kind-hearted fellow."

He said this with the most comical earnestness, as if this inability had prevented him from performing a Christian duty.

I said I sympathised very much, and asked if there were no veracious history ready-made.

"Well, really," he answered, "I can't find much, even from that young curiosity-shop, the sexton. It is so ridiculous of them to have a *young* sexton, isn't it? He says that a hundred years ago the inn belonged to a man of the name of Knight, and that he discovered

in a cellar several human skeletons, which he interred in the churchyard. There is a tradition that, in the latter years of Henry VIII., the dispersed monks crept back, one by one, to the old home of their love and prayer, to be buried by two members of the order who hung about it as long as life lasted, hiding in the wood there, then a great forest." My new friend pointed to the rich masses of trees to the right, up on which the purple of evening was already falling.

"I must tell you," he continued, hesitating a moment, "that I have a special interest in the sexton's tale. Knight 'I am hight,' as the old chroniclers say, and I am glad that one of the name should behave decently to the poor fellows." The shadow of his heavy brows seemed to have quenched the blue light of his eyes, and he stood musing. I should have gone to fetch my brother to see the garden in its sunset beauty, but that he at this moment emerged from the archway. The direct rays of the low sun blinded him as he crossed the

ancient lawn. He shaded his eyes with his hand, and called—

“Pen, Pen, where by the living earth have you got to?” This was his one little “swear,” and it fell very oddly from his lips. The least irascible of men, he had invented this expression for an affected irritation, and it still amused me after half a lifetime’s acquaintance with it. I saw Mr Knight’s eye twinkle.

“My dear George,” I said, “I am not a hundred miles away, and you nearly tumbled over Mr—Mr Knight. As we are so far away from modern conventions in this old garden, may I introduce, after such a short acquaintance, Mr Knight, my brother, George Hardy, to you?” The two men shook hands, and George, putting his hand on my arm, turned me in the direction of the house, remarking, “I am always obliged to shout if she happens to be in a garden. She is not tall at the best, but put her among plants and animals and earth-worms, and down on the ground she goes. I am short-sighted, and she be-

comes a stumbling-block, you see." Our new acquaintance smiled.

"I quite thank those habits of Miss Hardy's, they have given me a very pleasant half-hour ;" and he walked back with us over the grass, darkening now with mysterious shadows from the gables and the trees on either side.

We had dined together in the parlour, thankful that we were too early for that imitation of the old refectory, which our host promised us for a next year's visit, and had fallen silent but for that broken dropping of slow thoughts which characterises the dusk's harmonious hour. The last straying finger of the sunlight touched a single dahlia, red as blood, which stood near the window on a quaint bracket, old grey oak itself, projecting from the panelling of yet older oak, sun-bleached to a delicacy of tint which no art can imitate, and against which the flower gleamed like a flame.

My brother had thrown himself on a "*settle*" beneath the window, which was low

and long, and the sun turned his hair to the fairness of his boyhood. I sat deep in the room in a curious embrasure with a slit of a window of its own, and Mr Knight had chosen a comfortable wicker chair, facing George, such light as remained being full on his face.

“Penelope,” came from the window, “hand me those magnum-bonums if you please, I have a craving for another.”

Now, I knew by an oft-repeated experience the end of that craving—the dish was emptied, and a sleepless night resulted,—so I began to dissuade him. I reminded the speaker of several disastrous occasions when his favourite plums had betrayed him into a land of portents and nightmares. He shook a threatening hand at me as I removed the dish, and complained—

“Penelope, never boast of your affections for earth-worms, you are an inhuman creature, and ignorant of sisterly love. Nightmares, indeed! what’s a nightmare compared with those delectable magnum-bonums?” With the dish in my hand, I turned to Mr Knight,

“Isn't he——” I began.

But the trivial question died on my lips. The dreamy quiet of his face had broken up as it were into trouble and agitation, and he was startlingly pale. He struggled to speak, and presently, with a forced smile, managed to say in a strained voice—

“No, I am not ill, Miss Hardy, don't look at me with that kind solicitude. Really, I think it was that mention of nightmares,—and, well, some stupid memory. Don't you think I look a nervous person?”

The pallor, the unnatural voice, and the signs of strong emotion had so affected us both, that neither George nor I could respond quickly to his endeavour to restore the former conditions. He had been very interesting in a shrewd and quiet way, telling us of his seven years' life in Natal, and in the course of conversation it came out that he was now coming home for good. He had a small estate in Sussex, which had been in his family for centuries, and which, since his mother's death, had been let to strangers. And he was on

his way to see his young brother at Winchester before settling finally in the old home. He had just spoken of the new life with an almost boyish pleasure, and this sudden change in his demeanour disquieted us exceedingly. In spite of ourselves, we could not fall back into the previous mood. He saw this. He considered a moment, and with a little foreign gesture of the right hand, as if he flung something from him, looked at my brother steadily, questioningly, and said—

“Mr Hardy, you are both so friendly and good to me, that I should like to tell you why I was disturbed when you spoke of a nightmare. No, please don't object! I shall feel relieved, I am sure.” And he was so bent upon telling us, that we could protest no further.

The atmosphere of the room had changed to me. The evening peace was broken. A sense of tension and oppression, as of an approaching tempest, weighed upon me. George rose and drew together the logs, which our host had insisted on kindling in the great fireplace. The ruddy light blazed up. Our

young friend bent forward in the glow as if it cheered him, then he said—

“Isn't it odd that I have gone for years without any impulse to tell this queer story of mine, and now to-night I have a sort of longing to unburden myself? The fact is, I have been visited, ever since my childhood, by a very strange and inexplicable nightmare, and though it comes less frequently now, when it does come——” he shook his head as if to shake off some distasteful memory, “it is more alarming, and has a stronger effect on me. And it doesn't spring from magnum-bonums, Miss Hardy. The question is—being what it is, why does it come at all? The first time, I remember I was about six, and I awoke trembling. I slept in my father's dressing-room, not being very well. The fire had gone out, and the dressing-room, which was quite small, had stretched out at the further end into a wide and illimitable plain. There was a confused sound in my ears of trampling hoofs and clanging metal, and I saw dim figures of men and horses

charging each other in furious fight. I knew nothing, I think, at that time, of the Crusades, but the scene before me would have reminded any older boy of them. It was a hustling confusion of mounted and unmounted men, many of them dark-complexioned. I could scarcely distinguish their features, but they wore turbans and flowing garments. I seemed to feel the wind of the rush of one black warrior as he hurled his horse against the white leader, whose visor must have been up, for I saw his face shine in the dusk, and I think the black man went down. As he passed, I saw his face, and I have often seen it since, it frightened me then, and," he laughed shortly, "it frightens me still."

He drew in his breath quickly. George was watching him with a perplexed anxiety, and no longer lay carelessly on the old oaken seat, but was sitting upright, his whole body attentive. "How strange, what a very unpleasant type of nightmare!" I remarked, but our friend did not hear me. He went on—

"I remember I screamed, and that mother

ran in," the blue and brilliant eyes shone out from the lowering brows as he said "Mother."

"Yes, she came in, and carried me into her own room, and rocked me in her low rocking-chair, and I can hear even now her voice in the Lord's Prayer, and the way she said, 'Deliver us from evil,' ah, so tenderly!"

The mere recollection of this calmed him, and in a more natural tone he added—

"That fellow, Mr Hardy, is always the troublesome element."

"My dear boy," answered my brother lightly, and his manner had so much kindness and fatherliness in it, that no one could have resented the familiarity, "It is only a dream, curious, I admit, but the brain is a curious workshop, and turns out the oddest productions."

"But if a dream, why does it return again and again, at no particular interval, increasing in distinctness and detail at each recurrence? For instance, the plain is not dark now, but softly lighted as if the dawn were breaking. And I can see the crosses upon the tunics of

the Europeans and the cognizance on the helmet of their leader."

"An addition of later knowledge, perhaps," muttered George. Mr Knight shook his head and continued, "No, I think not, and for this reason. There is a tradition in the family that 'Knight' came from '*the* Knight,' a distinction applied to a crusading ancestor of mine after a terrible encounter with a force of Saracens who surprised the rear-guard of the Crusaders. Owing to his amazing bravery and to the fact that he overthrew and took prisoner the captain, a man with the reputation of a wizard, or at least of a dabbler in magic, the battle turned against the Paynim, you see. And sometimes I actually think that that wretch is at the bottom of my miserable experience."

"What happened to him?" I asked.

"He swallowed poison, it is said, even before the battle was over," he answered.

Suddenly, with an impetuosity quite foreign to his ordinary manner as we knew it, he exclaimed—"Miss Hardy—the worst is, that

on the last three or four occasions *I myself* fight with the wretch, I do, I assure you. I feel his grip on my throat, and his wicked eyes menace me with an indescribable ferocity. It is horrible! And the odd thing is, that I am quite *breathed* and exhausted when I awake. Just for all the world as if I had had a tussle which had nearly been too much for me." His breath came in short, hurried gasps, there was a horror in his voice which communicated itself to us. He went on—

"The last time, I awoke repeating 'Libera nos e malo.' Latin of all things! A thing I never did in my life before!"

There was a low exclamation from my brother. The atmosphere of unrest and trouble gave a quite physical misery to my heart. If I had spoken I should have wept. We were all three silent for a time. Then George spoke—

"It is amazingly strange," he said, "but I would not dwell upon it if I were you, certainly not at night."

Mr Knight got up and began to pace the

floor. His manner had changed. His next words were low and quiet.

"It is strange, as you say—but it has its good side. I believe I am a better fellow for it. I have had an idea, quite mediæval you will think,"—he smiled a little apologetic smile which sat well on him,—“an idea that a good life helped me to throw off the influence of the nightmare,—of the scoundrel, and that, but for the effort after this, I should have succumbed. Yes, really, and the thought has helped me a hundred ways. I have never let go my hold on, well, on God, as lots of fellows do now. Probably I should have dropped away but for this.” George flicked something from his eyelashes and cleared his throat. The young man continued slowly, “And I always think that if I could once get the better of him, if he were done for, you know, there would be an end of the whole thing. Then my children, or my brother perhaps, would be freed from about the worst old man of the sea that a modern Sinbad ever carried.”

He smiled brightly as he finished. He had, as he said, unburdened himself, and had grown younger—happier. He gave the smouldering log a blow, which filled the cavernous hollow of the fire-place with ascending sparks, and looking at me in my corner, cried, "My dear Miss Penelope—you will let me say Miss Penelope, won't you? it is a delightful name—how abominably rude and selfish I have been! you are quite white, I have shocked you! Let us talk of something else, something modern and merry. I have to start at half-past six, but I can give myself another hour if you are not tired." And we did talk, I seconded him to the best of my power, and we succeeded to a certain extent in banishing the gloom. The one of the three most unlike himself was my brother. He flashed out a droll conceit occasionally, but he was restless and uneasy. He drew the curtain sharply over the window, as if the streaming moonlight annoyed him.

Just before half-past eleven young Knight said good-bye. We all went up the broad

staircase together, and on the landing separated with much cordiality and with hearty hope of future meeting.

“And if those old monks disturb you, Miss Penelope, just sing out for me, I am at the other end of the corridor.” Thus saying, our new acquaintance walked down the broad river of light which flooded the gallery, turning at his door and waving his hand to us who still stood watching him.

“He has become a young lad again,” said my brother as he passed into his room.

I could not sleep. I drew up the blinds and sat down in a big arm-chair at the foot of the bed. My thoughts were busy with the events of the evening, and after watching the glittering brook at the end of the meadow for a few minutes, I determined to write down the strange story which Mr Knight had told us. My bedroom was in the front of the house, only a strip of garden lay below, and beyond, the fields stretched to the woodland. After writing what I could remember, and I doubt whether I had forgotten anything, I suppose I

fell asleep for more than an hour. I awoke with an intolerable sense of anguish, pained alike in body and in spirit. It was only by a strong resolution that I rose from my chair, and I tottered on my feet. I had, I said to myself, taken cold. And yet this acute wretchedness was not a symptom of cold. At this moment a sound of distant chanting arrested me, it brought to me a swift vision of the interior of Notre Dame during high mass. Had I really heard it? Within and without all was quiet as the grave. But as I took my rings off, the slow measured singing came distinct and sweet upon the night air. All my faculties were strained to the utmost, and yet somehow clouded. I remembered clearly the old tradition of the monks, but I forgot where I stood. My heart thumped loudly in my ears, I walked unsteadily to the door, and as my fingers closed round the handle the music was louder than the tumultuous beating of my heart. Above all came a cry from the other end of the gallery. The handle turned

from outside, and George hastily opened the door.

"Come, Pen, come," he urged. His face was very pale, and his voice shook. But he drew my arm in his with a protecting love, and continued hurriedly—"It is that poor, dear boy; something has happened, and you understand illness, little woman, don't be afraid."

At Mr Knight's door he whispered "Courage." Then we went in. The room was in great disorder, the table in the corner overturned, there were signs everywhere of confusion. On the floor, near the long mullioned window, lay our friend. He had pulled the bedclothes partly over him, but evidently his strength had failed, for his chest and arms were all uncovered, except for the thin night-shirt, and that had been dragged open and torn at the throat. I knelt down by him, his eyes were closed, his breathing terribly loud and laboured, and the veins upon his forehead and at the side of his throat were swollen and darkly purple. The room was light as day; the serene moon, unattended

by a cloud, looked down upon the scene with a sovereign indifference. We spoke to our poor friend, but he was unconscious. We tried to raise him, but the difficulty of breathing increased so much that we were obliged to lay him down and make him as comfortable as we could with blankets and rugs. I remembered our brandy flask, and sent George for it, asking him to fetch it quickly before summoning the landlord. His flying steps were back before I could have counted fifty, and yet his absence seemed to cover years.

As I took the stimulant from his hand our eyes met, and we knew that we had the same thought—the same amazing, improbable thought. As I poured a few drops of brandy into the open mouth, and bathed the terribly heaving chest with the warm spirit, the nightmare which had been described to us with such evident disturbance of mind pressed upon me as the one solution of the mystery—of the cry, the disordered room, the state of the man on the floor.

Yet my reason fought against this conclusion, and continued to fight, as we, helped by the landlord and the quickly-summoned doctor, strove to conquer the deadly exhaustion which succeeded the struggle for breath. The white flood of the moonlight had ebbed away, and the little circle of yellow lamp-light was paling before the slow victory of the dawn.

It was at this transitional hour, as I was fanning the patient, and the doctor was again motioning for the brandy, that the landlord muttered, "Great Scot! he's waking up!" He had remained for the last hour and a half at the feet of the quiet figure on the floor, chafing them with his hands, and expressing his anxiety from time to time in curiously profane and inappropriate ejaculations. As he spoke, Mr Knight's eyes opened; they searched the shades at the end of the room. I came forward and knelt where he could see me, and he recognised me at once.

"Miss Pen," he whispered, and moved his hand nearer to me. The familiar name—my

brother's name for me—broke me down; I could not speak.

His eyes closed, but only for a moment; in this moment I noticed the extraordinary youthfulness of the face. The glowing light found no lines, no sternness, and the shadow of the brows had lifted. In that moment the eyes had changed. They were radiant; they looked beyond us with the bright and glad smile of a little child. He lifted his arms eagerly and cried—

“Mother!”

The doctor and George raised him slightly. His soul spoke through his eyes, and his frame quivered with the strength of his desire. We held our breath, but I heard something like a smothered sob from the landlord.

“Mother—I—I overcame,” stammered the hurrying voice. “He was nearly too much for me, but I overcame.”

He lay back heavily upon the supporting arms, his hands dropped by his side, but his eyes, filled with a great love, were fixed

beyond and above us still. We all recognised that the end had come, we waited as it were upon his lips. He spoke again, but in a weaker voice and very slowly—

“The boy—will have no bother of that kind. I think—God—told me so! You are glad, mother. He nearly had me down—but—I—overcame.” The dying hands clasped each other and clear and solemn rose the words,

“*Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini*”
(Our help is in the name of the Lord).

“*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritu Sancto.*”

He turned his head upon the doctor's shoulder with a weary content, and sighed rather than uttered the “Amen.” And the first red of the morning touched the dead cheek with life.

Then it was that our stirred and sorrowing hearts were held by music from the garden. Singing, as from a full choir, rose in the thin air of the waking day. My tears which were running fast were dried by the exceeding sweetness, the rare and heavenly sweetness

of the chanting voices. The angel of peace and the angel of hope were with us in that dawn-lit room, and the oppression of the nightmare vanished from my soul. We were all conscious of the strains coming near and nearer, we heard them fade and die away, dying first to the outward ear, and lingering for a space in our waiting consciousness. And we all silently echoed my brother's awe-stricken whisper, "It is a Requiem for the Dead."

THE REVENGE OF HER RACE

THE low hedge, where the creepers climbed, divided the lawn and its magnificent Wellingtonias from the meadow. There was little grass to be seen, for it was at this time one vast profusion of delicate ixias of every bright and tender shade.

The evening was still, and the air heavy with scent. In a room opening upon the verandah, wreathed with white and scarlet passion-flowers, where she could see the garden and the meadow, and, beyond all, the Mountain Beautiful, lay a sick woman. Her dark face was lovely as an autumn leaf is lovely—hectic with the passing life. Her eyes wandered to the upper snows of the mountain, from time to time resting upon the brown-haired English girl who sat on a low stool by her side, holding the frail hand in her cool, firm clasp.

The invalid was speaking; her voice was curiously sweet, and there was a peculiarity about the "s," and an occasional turn of the sentence, which told the listener that her English was an acquired language.

"I am glad he is not here," she said slowly. "I do not want him to have pain."

"But perhaps, Mrs Denison, you will be much better in a day or two, and able to welcome him when he comes back."

"No, I shall not be here when he comes back, and it is just as it should be. I asked him to turn round as he left the garden, and I could see him, oh, so well. He looked kind and so beautiful, and he waved to me his hand. Now he will come back, and he will be sad. He did not want to leave me, but the Governor sent for him. He will be sad, and he will remember that I loved him, and some day he will be glad again." She smiled into the troubled face near her.

The girl stroked the thick dark hair lovingly.

"Don't," she implored, "it hurts me. You

are better to-night, and the children are coming in." Mrs Denison closed her eyes, and with her left hand she covered her face.

"No, not the children," she whispered, "not my darlings. I cannot bear it, I must see them no more." She pressed her companion's hand with a sudden, close pressure. "But you will help them, Alice; you will make them English like you—like him. We will not pretend to-night, it is not long that I shall speak to you. I ask you to promise me to help them to be English."

"Dear," the girl urged, "they are such a delicious mixture of England and New Zealand—prettier, sweeter than any mere English child could ever be. They are enchanting." But into the dying woman's eyes leapt an eager flame.

"They must be all English, no Maori!" she cried. A violent fit of coughing interrupted her, and, when the paroxysm was over, she was too exhausted to speak. The English nurse, Mrs Bentley, an elderly Yorkshire woman, who had been with Mrs Denison since

her first baby came six years ago, and who had, in fact, been Horace Denison's own nurse-maid, came in and sent the agitated girl into the garden.

"For you haven't had a breath of fresh air to-day," she said. At the door Alice turned. The large eyes were resting upon her with an intent and solemn regard, in which lay a message. "What was it?" she thought, as she passed through the wide hall sweet with flowers. "She wanted to say something; I am sure she did. To-morrow I will ask her." But before the morrow came she knew. Mrs Denison had said *Good-bye*.

The funeral was over. Mr Denison, who had looked unaccountably ill and weary for months, had been sent home by Dr Danby for at least a year's change and rest, and the doctor's young sister had yielded to various pressure, and promised to stay with the children until he returned. There was every reason for it. She had loved and been loved by the gentle Maori mother, she delighted in the dark beauty and sweetness of the children.

And they, on their side, clung to her as to an adorable fairy relative, dowered with love and the fruits of love, tales and new games and tender ways. Best reason of all, in a sense, Mrs Bentley, that kind autocrat, entreated her to stay, "as the happiest thing for the children, and to please that poor lamb we laid yonder, who fair longed that you should! She was mightily taken up with you, Miss Danby, and you've your brother and his wife near, so that you won't be lonesome, and if there's aught I can do to make you comfortable, you've only to speak, Miss." As for Mr Denison, he was pathetically grateful and relieved when Alice promised to remain.

After the evening romp, and the last good-night, when the two elder children, Ben and Marie, called after her mother, Maritana, had given her their last injunctions to be sure and come for them "her very own self" on her way down to breakfast in the morning, she usually rode down between the cabbage-trees, down by the old Rata, fired last autumn.

Away through the grass lands to the doctor's house, a few miles nearer Rochester, or he and his wife would ride out to chat with her. But there were many evenings when she preferred the quiet of the airy house and the garden. The colonial life was new to her, everything had its charm, and in the colonies there is always a letter to write to those at home, the mail-bag is never satisfied. On such evenings it was her custom to cross the meadow to the copse of feathery trees beyond, where, sung to by the brook and the Tui,¹ the children's mother slept. And from the high presence of the Mountain Beautiful, there fell a dew of peace.

She would often ask Mrs Bentley to sit with her until bed-time, and revel in the shrewd North-country woman's experiences, and her impressions of the new land to which love had brought her. Each woman grew to have a sincere and trustful affection for the other, and one night, seven or eight months after Mrs Denison's death, Mrs Bentley

¹ Tui—the parson bird,

told a story which explained what had frequently puzzled Alice, the patient sorrow in Mrs Denison's eyes, and Mr Denison's harassed and dejected manner. "But for your goodness to the children," said the old woman, "and the way that precious baby takes to you, I don't think I should be willing to say what I am going to do, Miss. Though my dear mistress wished it, and said, the very last night, 'You must tell her all about it, someday, Nana'—and I promised, to quiet her,—I don't think I could bring myself to it if I hadn't lived with you and known you." And then the good nurse told her strange and moving tale.

She described how her master had come out young and careless-hearted to New Zealand in the service of the Government. And how scandalised and angry his father and mother, the old Tory Squire and his wife, had been to receive from him, after a year or two, letters brimming with a boyish love for his "beautiful Maori princess," whom he described as having "the sweetest heart, and

the loveliest eyes in the world." It gave them little comfort to hear that her father was one of the wealthiest Maoris in the island, and that, though but half-civilised himself, he had had his daughter well educated in the "Bishop's" and other English schools. To them she was a savage. There was no threat of disinheritance, for there was nothing for him to inherit. There was little money, and the estate was entailed on the elder brother. But all that could be done to intimidate him was done, and in vain. Then silence fell between the parents and the son.

But one spring day came the news of a grandson, called Benjamin, after his grandfather, and an urgent letter from their boy himself, enclosing a prettily and humbly-worded note from the new strange daughter, begging for an English nurse. She told them that she had now no father and no mother, for they had died before the baby came, and if she might love her husband's parents a little she would be glad.

“My lady read the letters to me herself,” Mrs Bentley said, “I’d taken the housekeeper’s place a bit before, and she asked me to find her a sensible young woman. Well, I tried, but there wasn’t a girl in the place that was fit to nurse Master Horace’s child. And the end of it was, I came myself, for Master Horace had been like my own when he was a little lad. My lady pretended to be vexed with me, but the day I sailed she thanked me in words I never thought to hear from her, for she was a bit proud always.” The faithful servant’s voice trembled. She leaned back in her chair, and forgot for the moment the new house, and the new duties. She was back again in the old nursery with the fair-haired child playing about her knees. But Alice’s face recalled her, and she continued the story. She had, she said, dreaded the meeting with her new mistress, and was prepared to find her “a sort of a heathen woman, who’d pull down Mr Horace till he couldn’t call himself a gentleman.”

But when she saw the graceful creature who received her with gentle words and gestures of kindness, and when she found her young master not only content, but happy, and when she took in her arms the laughing healthy baby, she felt—though she regretted its dark eyes and hair—more at home than she could have believed possible. The nurseries were so large and comfortable, and so much consideration was shown to her, that she confessed, “I should have been more ungrateful than a cat if I hadn’t settled comfortable.”

Then came nearly five happy years, during which time her young mistress had found a warm and secure place in the good Yorkshire heart. “She was that loving and that kind, that Dick Burdas the groom used to say that he believed she was an angel as had took up with them dark folks, to show ’em what an angel was like.” Mrs Bentley went on—

“She wasn’t always quite happy, and I wondered what brought the shadow into her

face, and why she would at times sigh that deep that I could have cried. After a bit I knew what it was. It was the Maori in her. She told me one night that she was a wicked woman, and ought never to have married Mr Horace, for she got tired sometimes of the English house and its ways, and longed for her father's 'wharé'; that's a native hut, Miss. She grieved something awful one day when she had been to see old Tim, the Maori who lives behind the stables. She called herself a bad and ungrateful woman, and thought there must be some evil spirit in her tempting her into the old ways, because, when she saw Tim eating, and you know what bad stuff they eat, she had fair longed to join him. She gave me a fright I didn't get over for nigh a week. She leaned her bonnie head against my knee, and I stroked her cheek and hummed some silly nursery tune—for she was all of a tremble and like a child—and she fell asleep just where she was."

"Poor thing," said Alice, softly.

"Eh, but it's what's coming that upsets me

ma'am. Eh, what suffering for my pretty lamb, and her that wouldn't have hurt a worm! Baby would be about six months old when she came in one day with him in her arms, and they ~~were~~ a picture. His little hand was fast in her hair. She always walked as if she'd wheels in her feet, that gliding and graceful. She had on a sort of sheeny yellow silk, and her cheeks were like them damask roses at home, and her eyes fair shone like stars. 'Isn't he a beauty, Nana?' she asked me, 'If only he had blue eyes, and that hair of gold like my husband's, and not these ugly eyes of mine!' And as she spoke she sighed as I dreaded to hear. Then she told me to help her to unpack her new dress from Paris, which she was to wear at the Rochester races the next day. Mr. Horace always chose her dresses, and he was right proud of her in them. And next morning he came into the nursery with her, and she was all in pale red, and that beautiful! 'Isn't she scrumptious, Nana?' he said in his boyish way, 'don't spoil her dress, children. How like her

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Marie grows!’ Those two little ones, they had got her on her knees on the ground, and were hugging her as if they couldn’t let her go. But when he said that, she got up very still and white—

“‘I am sorry,’ she said, ‘they must never be like me.’

“‘They can’t be like any one better, can they, baby?’ he answered her, and he tossed the child nearly up to the ceiling. But he looked worried as he went out. I saw them drive away, and they seemed happy enough. And, oh Miss, I saw them come back. We were in the porch, me and the children. Master Horace lifted her down, and I heard him say, ‘Never mind, Marie.’ But she never looked his way nor ours; she walked straight in and upstairs to her room, past my bonnie darling with his arms stretched out to her, and past Miss Marie, who was jumping up and down, and shouting ‘Muvver,’ and I heard her door shut. Then Master Horace took baby from me.

“‘Go up to her,’ he said, and I could

scarce hear him. His face was all drawn-like, but I felt that silly and stupid that I could say nothing, and just went upstairs." Mrs Bentley put her knitting down, and throwing her apron over her head sobbed aloud—

"O, Nurse, what was it?" cried Alice, and the colour left her cheeks, "do tell me, I am so sorry for them, what was it?" It was several minutes before the good woman could recover herself, then she began—

"She told me, and Dick Burdas he told me, and it was like this. When they got to the race-course,—it was the first races they'd had in Rochester,—all the gentry was there, and those that knew her always made a deal of her, she had such half-shy winning ways! And she seemed very bright, Dick said, talking with the governor's lady, who is full of fun and sparkle. The carriages were all together, and Major Beaumont, a kind old gentleman who's always been a good friend to Master Horace, would have them in his

carriage for luncheon, or whatever it was. Dick says he was thinking that she was the prettiest lady there when his eye was caught by two or three parties of Maories setting themselves right in front of the carriages. There were four or five in each lot, and they were mostly old. 'They got out their sharks' flesh and that bad corn they eat, and began to make their meal of them. Near Mrs Denison there was one old man with a better sort of face, and Dick heard her say to Master, 'Isn't he like my father?' What Master Horace answered he didn't hear, he says he never saw anything like her face, so sad and wild, and working for all the world as if something were fighting her within. Then all in a minute she ran out and slipped down in her beautiful dress, close by the old Maori in his dirty rags, and was rubbing her face against his, as them folks do when they meet. She had just taken a mouthful of the raw fish, when Master Horace missed her. He hadn't noticed her slip away. But in a moment he seemed to un-

derstand what it meant. He saw the Maori come out strong in her face, and he knew the Maori had got the better of everything, husband and friends and all. He gave a little cry, and in a minute he had her on her feet and was bringing her back to the carriage. Some folks thought Dick Burdas a rough hard man, and I know he was a shocker of a lad, he was fra Whitby, but that night he cried like a babby when he tell't me," and Mrs Bentley fell for a moment into the dialect of her youth.

"He said," she continued, "that she looked like a poor stricken thing condemned, and let herself be led back as submissive as a child, and Mr Horace's face was like the dead. He didn't think anyone but the Major and Dr Danby saw her go, all was done in a minute, but it was done. And some few had seen, and it got out, and things were said that wasn't true. Not the doctor! No, miss, you needn't tell me that, he's told none, that I'll warrant. He's faithful and he's close."

“O, Mrs Bentley, how dreadful for her, how dreadful!” and the girl went down on her knees by the old woman, her tears flowing fast.

“That’s it, miss, you understand. I feel like that. It was bad enough for Master Horace with the future before him, and his children to think of, but for her it was desperate cruel. Eh, ma’am, what she went through! She loved more than you’d have thought us poor human beings could. And after all, the nature was in her, she didn’t put it there. I’ve had a deal to do to keep down sinful thoughts since then, there’s a lot of things that’s wrong in this world, ma’am.”

“What did she do?” Alice whispered.

“She! She was for going away and leaving everything, she felt herself the worst woman in the world. It was only by begging and praying of her on my knees that I got her to stay in the house that night, for she was so far English, and had such a fancy, that she saw everything blacker than any English-woman would, even the partick’lerest. After-

wards Master Horace was that good and gentle, and she loved him so much, that he persuaded her to say nothing more about it, and to try to live as if it hadn't been. And so she seemed to do, outward-like, to other people. But it wasn't ever the same again. Something had broken in them both, with him it was his trust and his pride, but in her it was her heart."

"But the children—surely they comforted her."

"Eh, Miss, that was the worst. Poor lamb, poor lamb,—never after that day, though they were more to her nor children ever were to a mother before, would she have them with her. Just a morning and a good-night kiss, and a quarter of an hour at most, and I must take them away. She watched them play in the garden from her window, or the little hill there, and when they were asleep she would sit by them for hours, saying how bonnie they were and how good they were growing. And she looked after their clothes and their food and every little toy

and pleasure, but never came in for a romp and a chat any more."

"Dear, brave heart," murmured the girl.

"Yes, ma'am, you feel for her, I know. She was fair terrified of them turning Maori and shaming their father. That was it. You didn't notice? No, after you came she was too ill to bear them about, and it seemed natural, I daresay. The Maoris are a fearful delicate set of folks. A bad cold takes them off into consumption directly. And with her there was the sorrow as well as the cold. It was wonderful that she lived so long." Alice threw her arms round Mrs Bentley's neck.

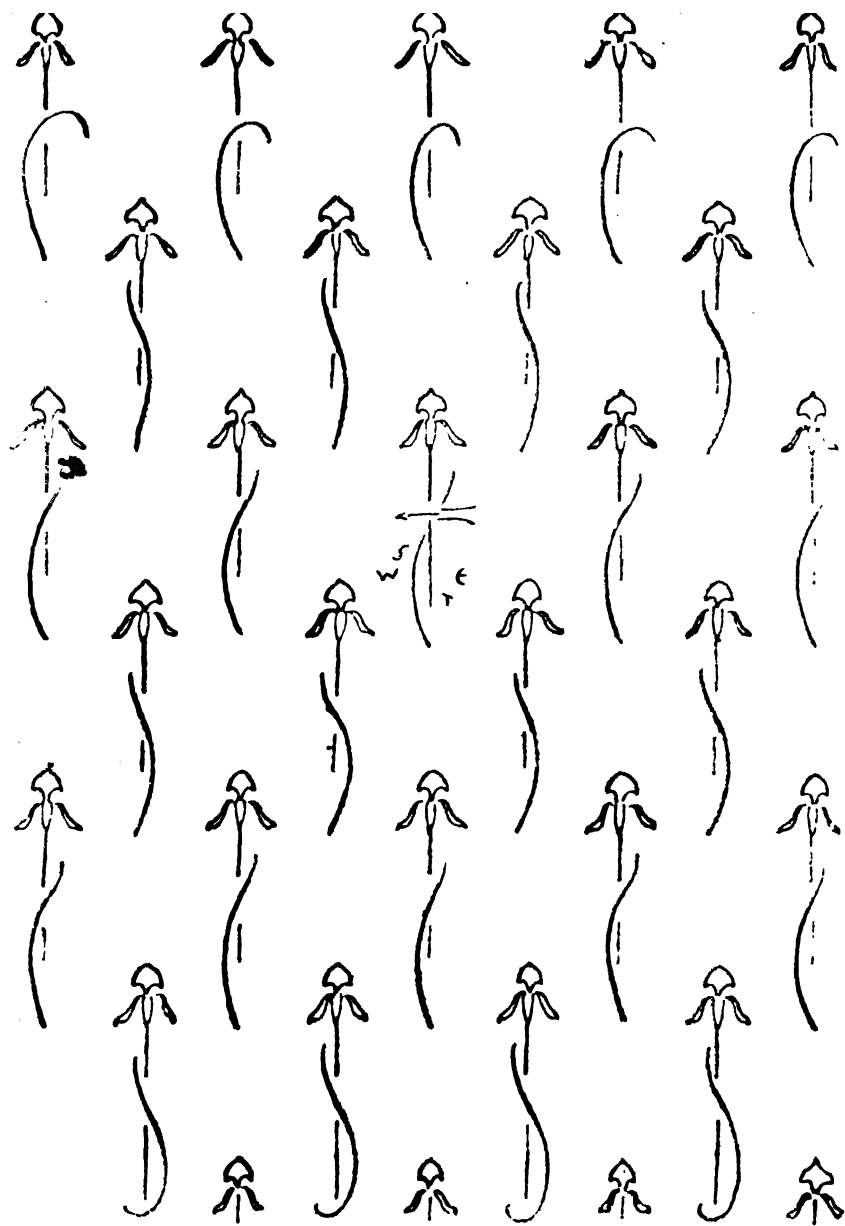
"Oh, nurse, it is all so dreadful and sad. Couldn't we have somehow kept her with us and made her happy?"

The old woman held her close. "Nay, my dear bairn, never after that happened. It, or worse, might have come again. It's something stronger in them than we know, it's the very blood, I'm thinking. But she's gone to be the angel that Dick always said she was."

Alice looked away over the starlit garden to where the plummy trees stirred in the night-wind. "No," she said fervently, "not 'gone to be,' nurse dear, she was an angel always. Dick was right."

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